Sivananda

BIOGRAPHY OF A MODERN SAGE

Life and Works of Swami Sivananda



Published by

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

P.O. SHIVANANDANAGAR-249 192

Distt. Tehri-Garhwal, Uttaranchal, Himalayas, India

First Edition:

1985

Second Edition:

2006

[1500 Copies]

©The Divine Life Trust Society

ISBN 81-7052-186-6 EO 66

Published by Swami Vimalananda for
The Divine Life Society, Shivanandanagar, and printed by him at
the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Press,
P.O. Shivanandanagar, Distt. Tehri-Garhwal, Uttaranchal,
Himalayas, India

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to:

- H.H. Sri Swami Venkatesananda Maharaj, whose mammoth task it was to compile and edit almost 300 of Swami Sivananda's books into 19 volumes, in spite of his demanding programmes and failing health.
- H.H. Sri Swami Chidananda Maharaj for graciously allowing us the publishing rights for the first edition of these volumes.
- H.H. Sri Swami Krishnananda Maharaj for his most comprehensive General Introduction to the volumes and for his support at various stages of the project.

Swami Brahmananda for his patient and painstaking help with the sanskrit quotes, etc.

Sri Narasimhuluji of the Divine Life Society Press, Rishikesh, for his continued encouragement.

Swami Venkatesananda's many devotees around the world who helped with typing and checking the manuscripts.

Swami Lakshmi Ananda for the final editing.

Devotees of Sivananda Ashram, Fremantle, Western Australia, who have so lovingly prepared the manuscripts for the press.

Jan Rolfe for the graphics.

The Publishers.

Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

by Swami Krishnananda

The Problem Stated

The world we live in is observed to be a solid mass of matter. Even our own bodies are seen to be parts of physical nature governed by mechanistic laws, which alone appears to be all that is real. It has become a commonplace idea today, especially in the universe of science, that life is strictly determined by the law of causality which rules over the entire scheme of the world. We are told that distinctions that are supposed to subsist between such realms of being as matter, life and mind are only superficial and are accounted for by the grades of subtlety in the manifestation and spreading of particles of matter. Even the organism of the human body, which appears to defy the laws of the universal machine that modern science envisages, is explained away as only one of the many forms of the workings of the brute force of matter which is the ultimate stuff of all things. The natural consequence of such a theory as this is the astonishing conclusion that human life, like every other material substance in the world, is completely determined by blind causal laws and the so-called free-will of man is subservient to them, if not a mere chimera. When we protest that man is not merely matter but also mind, it is explained that mind is nothing but a subtle and ethereal exudation of forces of matter. Man is reduced to an insignificant speck in the gigantic machinery of the cosmos which works ruthlessly with its own laws, unconcerned with the weal and woe of man.

This naturalistic interpretation of life, that is fast threatening to become rampant in this modern scientific and atomic age, seems to be really the philosophy of the common credulous man and even of the intelligent public who have neither the patience and the leisure (nor the equipment of understanding) to fathom the greater depths of human experience. Hand in hand with this theory of crass materialism there is a craze for more comfort and pleasure by lessening effort and movement of every kind, and an inherent feeling that material progress conceived at its zenith should be the ultimate purpose of existence. Due to an irrational faith in the efficacy and correctness of this doctrine, the man of the world seems to have forgotten the corruption of moral values today, the fall in the mental life and the standard of present-day education, and a sense of monotony and restlessness of spirit brought about by such a view of life, in spite of his riches and material possessions.

The fact that man is not merely a humble cogwheel in the deterministic machine of a relentless universe and that the essence of man is a spiritual principle co-extensive and co-eternal with the universal Spirit. was easily felt by many as a reaction to the very unsatisfactory and humdrum propaganda carried on by the materialists. The balance swung from the extreme of materialism holding that man is merged in the physical nature, to the other extreme of the idealism which propounded that man is perforce dragged on by the impetus of a cosmic spiritual Substance. The difference between these materialistic and idealistic theories is found finally to be in the conception of the ultimate stuff and constitution of the universe - the one advocating that it is matter, motion and force, and the other affirming that it is pure Mind or Spirit. But both agree in holding that man has no real choice and freedom of his own, he being inextricably involved, merged and lost in the ultimate reality of the universe, be it material, mental or spiritual. Unfortunate man discovered that it was hard for him, under such circumstances, to live a normal life of enjoyment of the aesthetic, religious and moral values — and at the same time feel his feet well planted on mother earth, with her richness and grandeur, promises and mysteries. Yet that life is not all. There is some awe-inspiring and terrible truth continuously pointed out by the phenomena of suffering, pain and death; by the restlessness of the world and the vicissitudes of life, the endless desires of man and the moral aspirations surging from within. The man of the world required a loving and sympathetic, reasonable and satisfying teaching to enable him to live as an individual, fulfilling his daily duties in life, and yet aspiring for that marvellous and magnificent Beyond which ever seems to beckon him through the tantalising veils of Nature.

With the advent of Western education, people began to move along the ruts of a so-called modernism of thinking, a rationality of approach Introduction

and a scientific attitude to life, and the sublimity and the wisdom of the lives of their ancient predecessors were slowly lost. There were many who delighted in doubting spiritual laws, in denying the superphysical, and went even to the extent of decrying soul and God. They succumbed to the glamour of applied science and the utility of an industrial revolution. The situation called for a revaluation of all values and for the building of man's inner life upon a stronger foundation. There emerged several powerful and authentic voices in the prominent fields of life's activity — politics, sociology, religion, yoga and spirituality — to correct erring minds and give articulation to the requirements of truth, law and morality. Swami Sivananda figured prominently among such leaders who brought about a thorough inner transformation in modern India, and placed the grand spiritual values on a firmer footing and in a proper setting.

The Mission of the Philosopher-Saint

This lacuna in the entire structure of life was carefully observed by the acute vision of Swami Sivananda, who made it his mission to give to the world a comprehensive philosophical theory, striking a balance between reconciling and blending together the demands of an obstinate empiricism and the principles and teachings of the lofty idealism that the eternal Spirit alone is real; and to design comprehensively a practice of certain synthesised techniques of inner and outer disicpline to achieve perfection. While being fully convinced of the doctrine of nondualism - that nought else than God can have any ultimate value and having entered personally into the stupendous reality of its experience, Swami Sivananda felt the need to intelligently tackle the situations in which the human mind is involved, without disturbing or upsetting the beliefs of the ignorant, and taking into consideration every aspect of man's life. We cannot teach that life in the sense-sphere is all, that the physical body and the external material world constitute the only reality: for the thoughtful nature raises the pertinent question that mind cannot be equated with matter; that love and joy refuse to be reduced to movements of electrons and protons; that the never-ending cry, from time immemorial, of the mystics and the religious men who professed to know and who proclaimed the existence of an unknown region and an unexplored reality of spiritual values - and of the clear possibility of such a thing as immortality - cannot be set aside as mere distorted voices of morbid spirits or abnormal natures. Nor is pretentious man, being what he is, to be satisfied by the extraordinary teaching that the world is not

there at all, that what he enjoys and suffers are mere phantasms, that life is a delirium of consciousness, that precious values which are so eagerly and anxiously treasured with zealous care are but the busy activities of a confused mind. For, the searching senses and the enquiring understanding vehemently complain that they see a world as hard, concrete and real as anything can be; that the body has its pains and pleasures; that life has its duties, burdens, griefs, wonders and patent meanings which cannot be brushed aside by any effort of logic; that the experience is real and cannot be abrogated as worthless by any stretch of imagination; that the visible is real and is valued, as amply testified by everyday experience. We cannot say that God created the world, for God has no desire to prompt Him to create. We cannot say that the world is God's play, for a perfect Being needs no play. We also cannot say that the world has no ultimate basis at all, for the changing phases of physical nature and the moral urges of the inner spirit in man assert that God ought to be.

Life - A Sadhana

Swami Sivananda addresses himself to the difficult but important task of taking man as he is - a growing organism of a psycho-physical character - neither wholly restricted naturalistically by the mechanism of the material world nor fully absorbed spiritualistically in the supermundane aim of divine existence. Man is not merely a body, a mind or a spirit, but a curious mixture of all these in a manner not comprehensible to ordinary intelligence. The Katha Upanishad says that the true 'enjoyer' (or the empirical agent of knowledge and action) is a composite structure of the Atman, the mind and the senses, together. Life is not merely a process of swirling masses of matter, groups of molecules, aggregates of atoms or vortices of electrical forces; nor is it an occasion for the study of psychology (or even metaphysics); nor an idealistic soaring into the realms of logical thought, mental phenomena or mere psychic experience. Man is at once a physical embodiment, a mental phenomenon and a spiritual entity. He has to appease not only the hunger of the body and the thirst of his vital forces, but has to pay equal, if not greater, attention to the demands of his psychic nature, moral tendencies and spiritual aspirations. Life is a synthesis of the forces manifesting in different orders and in a graduated scale of the evolutionary structure of nature. In this sense the whole of one's life is a sadhana, an integral endeavour for fullness on the part of mysterious man whose constitution, attention and training ranges at once from the lowest matter to the highest Spirit. As a body he is a creature of natural forces, subjected to the sufferIntroduction

ing and the mortality attending upon all composite structures in the physical world. He is one with inanimate matter when taken purely as a material structure. But man's tale does not end here. He grows like a plant, feels and reacts like an animal, and in-so-far as the craving for food, sleep and sex is concerned, he is indistinguishable from the inhabitants of the mute kingdom. But man struggles to reach above the realm of the brute, exercises a moral consciousness totally absent in animals, and displays a marvellous understanding power and reasoning capacity in distinguishing between true and false, right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly. This makes it amply clear that while partaking of the natures of matter, life and mind (observable also in the inanimate world, the vegetable kingdom and the subhuman beings) he is also more than all these; and while including these in his individual make-up he also transcends them in an astonishing degree. The life of man is thus very complex, embracing variegated elements, exhibiting diverse characteristics and manifesting different grades of reality. If life is a sadhana - a continuous journey and movement and a story of adjusting oneself to and adapting oneself with the vast universe - it is not enough if we merely look into one side of the picture. We have to consider every aspect of the revelation of reality in man. This is precisely the mission of Swami Sivananda, to whom all life is yoga, and whose writings are an elaborate dissertation on integral living.

The Education of Man

The human self is constituted of a consciousness which is not pure existence but a dynamic process. This dynamic process is interfused, as it were, with the nature of the circumstances in which it finds itself in the world - an environment of social elements, political restraints, moral commands, physical needs, vital urges, intellectual situations and the like. In other words, in his activities and in the problems he has to encounter every day, man discovers that his life is related to others' lives and undergoes growth and change as the world appears to change. We have to remember that human life is involved in the time-process and hence bound by temporal laws. The human self is in the world, though not of the world. Thus a study of man is nothing but a reflection on the totality of situations within the range of human knowledge — whether explicit as in the usual everyday experiences and in the themes of the physical and psychological sciences, implied as in philosophy or revealed as in religion. Such a study has to include in its gamut the whole of life's problems, in-so-far as they affect the human self, the aspiring individual.

Man thinks, feels and wills, and does not merely exist. Hence his approach to the religious value of God, the ethical value of duty and the logical value of truth, should proceed from his own central reality — as far as he experiences it in his daily life.

Human life is conceived by Swami Sivananda as a school of education for the jiva (or the empirical self) caught up in the meshes of ignorance, desire and activity. This education has to be physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, active and spiritual, all at once, in a way beautifully fitted to the conditions in which one is placed. The actual technique of this education differs in its details in different individuals, in accordance with their age, health, avocation, stage of evolution, social relations, etc., all of which call the attention of the soul in a variegated world. Essentially, any scheme of education should consist of methods for bringing about and effecting (1) the development of personality, (2) a knowledge of the world, (3) an adjustment of self with society, and (4) a realisation of the permanent values. By development of personality what is meant is the wholesome building up of the individual, not only with reference to the internal states of body, mind and consciousness, but also in relation to the external world reaching up to it through the different levels of society. In this sense, true education is both a diving inward and a spreading outward. Knowledge of the world is not merely a collection of facts or gathering information regarding the contents of the physical world, but forms a specific insight into its inner workings as well - at least in-so-far as man's inner and outer life is inextricably bound up with them. When this knowledge of one's own individuality and personality - as it is involved in a world of picturesque colours and varying depths - is acquired through intensive training by study, reflection and service of one's preceptor, it becomes easy for one to discover the art of adjusting oneself with society. Truly speaking, this adjustment is not possible for one who has no knowledge of the deeper spiritual nature of humanity.

The aim of the individual as well as of society is the realisation of the values — personal, social, political and even universal — all mutually related and determined by a common goal to which all these are directed, consciously or unconsciously. Ignorant man may not be fully aware that the eternal values of life are summed up in the all-comprehensive terms — God, Freedom, Immortality — and that all his daily struggles are nothing but gropings of his mind in the darkness of his ignorance to recognise and participate in these by way of all that he sees, hears or understands. To awaken the human spirit to this tremendous fact is the

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primary mission of Swami Sivananda, and his voluminous works cater variegatedly to the hungry souls who are in search of food but cannot find it for want of knowledge.

Characteristics of His Works

The writings of Swami Sivananda cover a vast range of subjects, in accordance with his plan of approaching man from every side and every aspect. These works treat of - in detail - such diverse topics as anatomy and physiology; health, hygiene and sanitation; physical exercise, first-aid and treatment of diseases; the discipline of the physical body through the technical hatha-yoga processes of asanas (or bodily postures), pranayama (or the regulation of the vital force and of breathing), bandhas, mudras and kriyas - all intricate methods of the perfection of the body to prepare it for withstanding the onslaughts of nature's pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, hunger and thirst; an exhaustive psychological analysis of the composition, working and behaviour of the inner man — the mental, volitional, affective, moral and rational natures which so much influence and decide the values of life as a whole; the duties of man, his relationship to family, community and nation; his position in the world and the universe; his national, international and world relations; the social, ethical and political structure of individuals; the assessment of both religious and spiritual values; and a comprehensive and penetrating discussion of the characteristics of the ultimate goal of human life, as well as an intensive treatment of the nature of the way leading to this goal.

In his expositions of these subjects Swami Sivananda appeals not merely to the rational and the scientific man — the intelligentsia of society — but also to the devout, the faithful and the believing, and the common masses ignorant of higher laws; to spiritual aspirants, recluses, sannyasins, householders, businessmen, women and children alike. It will be observed, on a careful study of his writings, that his appeal is more to the heart and the feelings, and his admonitions are mostly of a practical nature adapted for an immediate application in the day-to-day life of man belonging to every class of society.

His works are, strictly speaking, comprehensive gospels on the different yogas: e.g. (1) Jnana yoga (the philosophical technique of the rational and the scientific intellect in unravelling the secrets of nature and living a life of the wisdom, truth and justice of the law of the Absolute); (2) Raja yoga (the psychic and mystical way of analysing, dissecting and inhibiting the constituents and modifications of the mind-stuff, thus

enabling man to overcome its tyrannies and to rise to a comprehension of his position in a universality of the Spirit or the Purusha); (3) Bhakti yoga (the way of spiritual love and devotion directed to the majestic Sovereign of the universe, the merciful and compassionate Father of all creation, by which emotions - such as those fastening man to relationships with his parents, children, masters, friends and partner in life — are sublimated and ennobled by being centred in the universal nature of God, who promises man the hope of salvation when he has surrendered his self completely to him); (4) Karma yoga (the science and art of spiritual activity, a splendid manner of converting every action and every duty in life - physical, mental, moral or spiritual - into yoga by linking it up with a ceaseless consciousness of the omnipresence of the Absolute, of the surrender of personality to God, or of one's standing as an unaffected witness of the movements of the internal and external nature); (5) Hatha yoga (the disciplining of the physical body, the nervous system and the vital forces with a view to preparing the individual for the practice of the higher voga of inner discipline and meditation); (6) Kundalini yoga (the bringing into activity of a highly occult force dominant and latent in the individual, by a rousing of which - through a training of the prana and the mind — the illimitable resources of nature are spontaneously placed at the disposal of man, and he becomes possessed of a consciousness of his true at-one-ment with the universe); (7) Mantra, yantra and tantra yogas (the ways of certain purely mystic processes of generating spiritual forces and vibrations within, as also of relating these to the forces without, through the symbology of specific sounds, formulas, diagrams and rituals intended to free man from confinement to the lower nature, and raise him to the regions of the higher nature); (8) Japa yoga (the spiritual practice of chanting of the name of God or certain significant letters, words, phrases or sentences in order to bring about a condition of harmony and illumination in the inner nature of man); (9) Laya yoga (the method of the dissolution of the mind in the Spirit by the recession of effects into causes, the merging of the grosser in the subtler, and the raising of one's consciousness and force from the lower to the higher). Swami Sivananda displays a great mastery in the synthesis of these various yogas and assures the aspirant-world that success is bound to come when practice is backed up by sincerity, firmness and patience.

His Method of Approach

It is said that a sage of Self-realisation is like a pure crystal which has, by itself, no colour, but appears to assume the tint of any object that

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may be brought near it. He is supposed to behave, speak and act like a child with a child, an adult with an adult, an old man with an old man. a scholar with a scholar and an ignorant one with an ignoramus. The idea behind this spontaneous self-expression - uninitiated by any particularised motive, intention, effort or will — is a close following of one's true nature with the Divine Will, which is immanent and active in all beings, and which has neither partiality nor prejudice, neither preference nor ill-will in regard to anyone. Swami Sivananda, in his personal life and example as well as in his writings and speeches, reflected spontaneously. as it were, the nature manifested and exhibited by the environment around him, and acted in close keeping with a purely impersonal life. His works are not so much enunciations of principles for the guidance of the intellect and the reason, as practical instructions on the methods of the life spiritual, meant to go straight into the hearts of aspiring individuals (whether or not they have carefully thought out beforehand the conditions and the inner circumstances under which they have been prompted to take to the spiritual way of living).

There is no circumlocution, no statement of superficials or throwing of unnecessary side-lights in his writings. A clear-cut, well-defined and open path free from all mystifications and ambiguities is laid before the seeker with an intention not merely to give information but to enlighten and guide him at every step of his sadhana. His style and expression are remarkably simple, surging from the heart and the feeling of one who has not only had a vision of the perfection and the delight of God, but possesses an insight into the sufferings of man, the depth of his ignorance and his needs — not only physical, mental and moral, but also spiritual. His entire teachings are powerfully charged with the dominant spiritual note that all forms of life in society — whether individual or collective — have ultimately to be based on (and to derive meaning and inspiration from) the recognition of a boundless existence deeper than all that is visible and conceivable.

Fired with a deep anxiety to relieve the world of ignorance and pain, Swami Sivananda faced the situation in the best possible manner open to him, and spared no pains in harnessing all his energy for the noble divine purpose which he set before himself. His works are illustrative of almost every way of contacting man through literature — metaphysics, ethics, religion, mysticism, psychology, parables, stories, catechism, yoga, prayer and ritual.

The qualified student to approach his spiritual literature is neither one who is totally ignorant of spiritual values nor one who has attained to the apex of spiritual life. The aspirant endowed with the ethical and the moral qualifications of yama, niyama and sadhana-chatushtaya (the four kinds of spiritual effort: discrimination, dispassion, sixfold virtues and desire for liberation), who has, by his purity of mind, received monitions as to the existence of a higher life and is stirred with the zeal to grasp it and realise it in his own life, but is at the same time troubled by doubts and lack of knowledge in regard to the proper method of approaching it and the spiritual way of conducting himself, should turn to the works of Swami Sivananda.

Most of his writings begin with a vivid and clear portrayal of the nature of suffering in the world, the detection of which is the fundamental prerequisite of a spiritual way of life. Like Sankara, the philosopher, Swami Sivananda boldly affirms the existence of a supreme Absolute, second to which there can be none. Like the Buddha he gives a colourful picture of the character of pain in life and makes a careful diagnosis of the cause of this pain, gives a detailed analysis of the human psyche and delineates the laying out of the path which runs up to the ultimate perfection and peace of man, together with a dignified and glorious description of the characteristics of his final destiny.

The Philosophic Life

Swami Sivananda emphasises that life is the working out of a philosophy, and philosophy is the unravelling of the mystery of existence, an all-round consideration of the deeper implications of experience and not merely a raising of the mansions of logical systems. Philosophy is more a digging deep into the abyss of life than a flying into the air of abstract speculation. Swami Sivananda recognises that any philosophy divested of human concerns is doomed in the end to failure and can never appeal to the restless and inquisitive spirit of man. Philosophy, religion and life meant one and the same thing to him. They signify not any unworldly or other-worldly concepts, but move in close association with man's demands for food and love, fame and power, value for life, concern for others, regard for oneself and his ultimate aspiration for immortality in Brahman.

The ringing tone of Swami Sivananda's life and teachings is that of a divine love based on proper understanding, a love in which the obstructing barrier between man and man is broken open and in which one easily discovers a happy way of participating in the life of others in the world. Endless hope — which seems to be the only foundation of all human enterprises — bespeaks the remote possibility, if not the im-

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mediate fact, of a union of the personal will with the Universal Law of God. It is this love and this meaning of hope and aspiration that can assure a world-brotherhood, a world-government based on universal sympathy and altruistic considerations. It is this principle of humanitarianism and an acute perception of the necessity of rousing mankind to the presence of an Almighty God that characterise the life and teachings of Swami Sivananda.

The Vedas declare that there is no limit to God's glories and there is no cessation of man's endeavour to comprehend His Nature and the path leading to Him. Swami Sivananda caught the significance of this great truth and so never felt that spiritual teachings can have an end, that one can ever be tired of teaching the spiritual way of life or of listening to spiritual instructions, that there could be a limit to the carefulness with which the guru has to look after the welfare of his disciples at every stage. To him every moment is an opportunity for sadhana, an occasion to exercise unlimited caution in regard to one's spiritual practices and to be aware of the chance of temptations, thwartings, side-trackings and stagnations of mind and spirit in one's life.

The philosophic life is not strange. It is the normal flow of a well-adjusted and perfected activity in the healthy maturity of seasoned knowledge and profound insight into Truth.

The Secret of World-Peace

The inspiring teachings of Swami Sivananda constitute one long song of liberation, the liberation of the individual, the society, the community, the nation and the world - physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually. The central burden of this eternal song of all-round freedom is peace - peace to all, peace everywhere - by learning and imbibing the lesson that Life is One. Every breath that flows from man. every movement of his limbs, every turn of his behaviour, is a direct or indirect effort towards the reconstruction of his personality to suit a better purpose, to bring about an easier and happier condition of life with liberty and peace as its emblems. Man represents a microscopic specimen of what happens in the gigantic cosmos on a colossal scale. The attempt to reach unity, freedom and happiness - which are seen to be vigorously active in man - can also be seen to be busy in the fulfilment of the purpose of the cosmos. In one's own personal life, in society and in the state, man struggles to manifest a regular system and order, abolishing chaos and confusion. An intense passion for the firm establishment of system and order seems to be innate in the very structure of all beings,

especially in those self-conscious ones in whom the development of intelligence has come to the stage of displaying the ability to know the difference between right and wrong, true and false. The universe does the same thing, with this difference — that while man strives with insufficient knowledge, the universe moves freely with an unrestricted expression of this tendency to realise the highest truth, goodness and freedom in its own bosom.

The changes that take place in the parts are felt in the constitution of the whole. As every cell in the human body organises itself to live in accordance with the law that regulates the whole body, and as every error on the part of a cell brings about a reaction from the entire body with the purpose of setting right the wrong that has entered into its being, so does the cosmic Law correct the errors committed by the individuals who constitute the cosmos. Small errors cause mild reactions and great wrongs lead to tremendous upheavals. Even the so-called unobserved acts in the grosser world produce mighty vibrations in the subtler regions.

The entire teaching and activity of Swami Sivananda centres round an untiring stress on the possibility of individual and world peace on the basis of a knowledge and practice of this rule of Unity in every level of existence, in every man, woman and child. He ceaselessly warned humanity that peace cannot be had by warfare, exploitation, domination and competition, for these bursting waves on the surface are raised by the storms of desire and greed, and that there can be no rest for man until these violent commotions cease through understanding and co-operation. Man's concept of pleasure is nothing but an outcome of his erroneous judgment of a present good, his desire is the result of a wrong idea of a future good, his pain the consequence of a false notion of a present evil and his fear the corollary of a mistaken evaluation of the nature of a future evil. All passions and their several variations are veritable diseases brought on by erroneous thinking. These are to be eradicated, for they are irrational and founded on ignorance. Man needs proper education of his faculties in the direction of the real and the good in the highest sense. For Swami Sivananda, every activity in life can be transformed into a yoga of the Divine, provided the requisite knowledge is acquired by study, contemplation and service.

The revered Mahatma Gandhi did a signal service not only in the field of politics but also to religion, philosophy and ethics, when he emphasised the aspect of *Truth is God*. In the assertion commonly made, viz., *God is Truth*, the judgment involved is likely to become questionable, for the predicate 'Truth' is referred to 'God' whose existence is

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here presupposed or taken for granted. Naturally, those to whom the existence of God has not become an article of faith and whose rational attitude has not been convinced of it will take the assertion 'God is Truth' as not a demonstrated fact but a hypothetical proposition. But in the assertion 'Truth is God', no such sublime inconsequence is involved, for none can deny that there is such a thing as Truth. And this Truth is identified with what we have to understand by God. Truth is the law of the universe. This law is not blind but intelligence itself operating everywhere. Law and Law-Giver in this case are one. And likewise, to Swami Sivananda, Truth is not merely truth-speaking but 'That which is.' It is the unchanging, infinite and eternal Substance, which is at once the law and the love governing and guiding man, society, nation and world.

The true significance of this Truth and of this Love is not properly assimilated in ordinary man's life, but is fully realised in the life of the superman who is not only a world-ruler but also a self-ruler. It is not Nietzsche's egoistic elevation of man to power, but the Self-realised sage, a veritable embodiment of the Divine, that is the ideal superman, a being who is at one and the same time a man of the world and a representative of the Absolute. True knowledge is a knowledge of things in their essences, in their relation to the universe, in the relation of Truth. This Truth, this Law, when it is supported and protected, supports and protects everyone. Dharmo rakshati rakshitah. It is only when we realise that joy is in the fulfilment of the law of God that we become truly free and liberated from all bondage. Dharma is the innermost nature and truth of man and of the universe, for it is the body of the Divine Will. This is real duty, and here is the secret of world-peace. Swami Sivananda lived and preached this deathless truth, this law and order of Nature, for the solidarity of the world and for all mankind to emulate and follow. His divine mission shall be fulfilled when even a modicum of this knowledge shall succeed in throwing light into the dark corners in man's mortal nature.

Unity, The Home of Peace

Here is the essence of the law and the love that unites all the world. This is the rationale behind all the gospels of world-peace and doctrines of universal love and brotherhood. By broadcasting the ancient wisdom of India, the wisdom that discovered the true relation of man to his environment, Swami Sivananda ceaselessly urges humanity to muster forces for bringing about real peace in the world. All his teachings and messages

are lessons in the attainment of unity by the integration of personality in the consciousness of the Absolute. The aim of life is the practical realisation of the eternal spiritual essence which finds itself in man in a very limited and obscure form.

Every individual tries to stretch beyond himself by desiring, aspiring, longing. Desire of any kind is a disclosure, in one's conscious states, that there is something wanting, something lacking, something inadequate. Give the whole world to man; he will not be satisfied. Why? Because, there is that something, beyond the world, lying outside the possession of any earthly individual. Give him the whole of the heavens; he will still be dissatisfied, because there is yet an unfulfilled want. This grievous mishap is the direct result of man's ignorance of his unity with creation. 'For the magnanimous, the whole world is one family,' says the scripture. There can be no peace to man unless he begins to recognise. live and serve his vast surroundings as his own Self, until he does his best at least to approximate his conduct in daily life to this sublime ideal. Peace is only in God, and the peace which we can hope to enjoy in this world depends upon the extent to which we have succeeded in reading and manifesting this infinitude of the Spirit in our social, national and world relations. This achievement is not only a consequence of the knowledge and experience of Truth by man, but also a necessary condition of his attaining any success in his endless struggle for perfection. This is the teaching, the religion, the ethics, the philosophy and the gospel of Swami Sivananda to every son and daughter of this earth of every station in society. This is the hope of humanity.





HOW GOD CAME INTO MY LIFE

It would be easy to dismiss the question by saying: 'Yes, after a prolonged period of intense austerities and meditation while I was living in Swarg Ashram, during which I had the darshan of a number of maharishis and their blessings, the Lord appeared before me in the form of Sri Krishna.'

But that would not be the whole truth, nor a sufficient answer to a question relating to God Who is Infinite, Unlimited and beyond the reach of the speech and mind.

Cosmic Consciousness is not an accident or chance. It is the summit, accessible by a thorny path that has steep, slippery steps. I have ascended them, step by step, the hard way; but at every step I have experienced God coming into my life and lifting me easily to the next step.

My father was fond of ceremonial worship (puja) in which he was very regular. To my child-mind, the image he worshipped was God; and I delighted in helping father in the worship, by bringing him flowers and other articles of worship. The deep inner satisfaction that he and I derived from such worship implanted in my heart the deep conviction that God is in such images devoutly worshipped by His devotees. Thus did God come into my life and place my foot on the first rung of the ladder.

^{*} An article by Swami Sivananda specially contributed to Bhavan's Journal at the request of the renowned philosopher, statesman and writer, Sri K.M. Munshi (former governor of Uttar Pradesh).

As an adult, I was fond of gymnastics and vigorous exercises. I learnt fencing from a teacher who belonged to a low caste; he was a harijan. I could go to him only for a few days before I was made to understand that it was unbecoming of a caste-born brahmin to play the student to an untouchable. I thought deeply over the matter. One moment I felt that the God whom we all worshipped in the image in my father's puja-room had jumped over to the heart of this untouchable. He was my guru, all right! So, I immediately went to him with flowers, sweets and cloth, and garlanded him, placed flowers at his feet and prostrated myself before him. Thus did God come into my life to remove the veil of caste distinctions.

How very valuable this step was I could realise very soon after this: for I was to enter the medical profession and serve all, and the persistence of caste distinction would have made that service a mockery. With this mist cleared by the light of God, it was very easy and natural for me to serve everyone. I took very keen delight in every kind of service connected with the healing and alleviation of human misery. If there was a good prescription for malaria, I felt that the whole world should know it the next moment. Any knowledge about the prevention of disease, promotion of health and healing of diseases, I was eager to acquire and share with all.

Then God came into my life in the form of the sick in Malaya. It is difficult for me now to single out any instance; and perhaps it is unnecessary. Time and space are concepts of the mind and have no meaning in God. I can look back now upon the whole period of my stay in Malaya as a single event in which God came to me in the form of the sick and suffering. People are sick physically and mentally. To some, life is lingering death; and to some, death is more welcome than life. Some lead a miserable life, unable to face death; some invite death and commit suicide unable to face life. The aspiration grew within me, that if God had not made this world merely as a hell where wicked people would be thrown to suffer, and if there is (as I intuitively felt there should be) something other than this misery and this helpless existence, it should be known and experienced.

It was at this crucial point in my life that God came to me as a religious mendicant who gave me the first lessons in vedanta. The positive aspects of life here and the real end and aim of human life were made apparent. This drew me from Malaya to the Himalaya. God came to me in the form of all-consuming aspiration to realise Him as the Self of all.

Meditation and service went on apace; and with them came various spiritual experiences, till body, mind and intellect as the limiting adjuncts vanished and the whole universe shone in His Light. God then came in the form of this Light in which everything assumed a divine shape and the pain and suffering that seemed to haunt everybody appeared to be a mirage, the illusion that ignorance creates on account of low sensual appetites that lurk in man.

One more milestone had to be passed in order to know 'Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman' (All indeed is Brahman). Early in 1950 (on the 8th January) God came to me in the form of a half-demented assailant who disturbed the night satsang at the ashram. His attempt failed. I bowed to him, worshipped him and sent him home. Evil exists to glorify the good. Evil is a superficial appearance; beneath its veil the one Self shines in all.

A noteworthy fact ought to be mentioned here. In this evolution, nothing gained previously is entirely discarded at any later stage. One coalesced into the next; and the Yoga of Synthesis was the fruit. The effective and intelligent synthesis of murthi-puja (idol worship), selfless service of the sick, meditation, the cultivation of cosmic love that transcended the barriers of caste, creed and religion with the ultimate aim of attaining Cosmic Consciousness, was revealed. This knowledge had immediately to be shared. All this had become an integral part of my being.

The mission had been gathering strength and spreading. It was in 1950 that I undertook the All-India Tour. Then God came to me in His virat-swarup — multitudes of devotees eager to listen to the tenets of divine life. At every centre I felt that God spoke through me and that He Himself, in His virat-form spread out before me as the multitude, listened to it. He sang with me; He prayed with me; He spoke and He listened. Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman.

HERITAGE AND CHILDHOOD

Swami Sivananda was born at Pattamadai on the 8th of September 1887 at sunrise, when the star Bharani was in the ascendant. (There is a Tamil saying to the effect that 'One born in Bharani will rule the universe'.) His parents named him Kuppuswami.

His father, Sri P.S. Vengu Iyer of Pattamadai, was very virtuous, a devotee of Lord Siva and a man of great wisdom. He was the Revenue Officer of the Ettiapuram Estate and was content with his position.

Parvati, Vengu Iyer's wife, would read holy books during her leisure hours and sing the Lord's name with intense faith and devotion.

With such parentage the child grew up in the most congenial atmosphere.

Kuppuswami was the third child in the family. He had two older brothers. He was a well-built, beautiful child with a radiant smile, and was the most beloved child of his parents, who delighted in everything that he did.

There were certain obvious religious and spiritual characteristics in the boy. He had a rare peace of spirit and perpetual cheerfulness, combined with a high degree of intelligence which astounded even his parents. He picked up new knowledge quickly and playfully, without any effort. The whole village adored him. Through his childish pranks he would often smother smouldering fire inside the hearts of the villagers — fire of bitterness and hatred which frequently plays one family against another in Indian villages. This mischievous boy would cleverly bring about a re-union of such embittered villagers by forcing them to mix with each other. He was a great peace-maker, even then, and he cast a spell of

peace on those around him.

Pattamadai, Swami Sivananda's native village, is a lovely place with green paddy fields and mango groves all around; it is ten miles away from Tirunelveli Junction. A beautiful canal from Tambraparni river, known as Kanadiankal, encircles the village like a garland. The water is very sweet and health-giving. Pattamadai is famous as the place where the finest silk-like grass mats are made. All the children of Pattamadai have a good ear for music and can sing well. Pattamadai has produced many eminent musicians.

Kuppuswami loved music. His father would often sing the hymn Ananda Lahiri composed by Sankaracharya. Kuppuswami would be happy listening to the recitation, and if his father stopped singing he would prod him on to continue, by nagging him with 'hoom, hoom'. Kuppuswami did not often cry, but if on rare occasions he did his mother would sing Chandrasekhara Chandrasekhara Chandrasekhara pahi mam ('Lord Siva protect me') and he would stop crying and jump onto his mother's lap.

The holy word 'Siva' had a special fascination for him, and he would repeat words in which these two syllables formed part, even if those words had no religious connotation; and when his mother sang hymns in praise of the Lord he would lisp the words too.

From the day he began to walk, he happily accompanied his mother to the local temple, and he loved the sound of the temple bells. Even at a tender age he used to help his father in his worship. His father would perform his sandhyavandana (a religious rite that a brahmin performs thrice a day) and the little boy would try to imitate his actions. When his father worshipped Lord Siva, he would bring the bael leaves and flowers, and would place a small stone in front of him and worship it in imitation of his father. He was all attention during the chanting of the mantras and hymns, and though otherwise a mischievous child, he kept still and silent during the worship. He would join his parents in prayers and kirtan, and loved to listen to them reading *Bhagavatam* and *Ramayana*.

In those days a dramatic troupe used to tour South India, headed by Sri Kalyanarama Iyer. This troupe would often stage religious plays like the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavatam*. His father would take him to watch these plays. On returning home, he would happily imitate portions of what he had seen.

His parents would entertain him with spiritual stories. Even when he cried or refused to sleep they would never use the destructive method (commonly employed in many Indian households) of frightening the

child into slumber. Instead they told him stories of the Lord's incarnations when he went to bed.

Swamiji has himself revealed that he was a mischievous child. Through his mischief he would amuse and astonish others by the intelligence he displayed on such occasions.

Whenever sweets were prepared in the house the mother would divide them between the three brothers and sometimes a good quantity would be stocked in the family store-room for future distribution. Sturdy Kuppuswami, very active and energetic even in those days, would be the first to finish his. If his brothers had by this time not been able to finish theirs, he would take their share for himself. The stock-pots in the store-room would also rapidly get depleted of their contents, as he would distribute them to all his friends. In this boyhood mischief there was a glimpse, perhaps, of his future dictum of 'Do it now'.

Kuppuswami was in Pattamadai till his fifth year. He then moved to Ettiapuram where his father was working. In those days Ettiapuram was a small 'native state', ruled by a rajah who enjoyed the favour of the British Government and so was able to lead an easy-going life. He was thus able to devote himself to the promotion of fine arts. Ettiapuram was therefore a centre of fine arts. There were many scholars, savants and musicians who flourished there.

It was in Ettiapuram that Kuppuswami came into contact with a renowned musician and devotee of the Lord, Subbarama Dikshitar, whose home was just a few blocks from the hostel where Kuppuswami's parents had an apartment. Many were the evenings spent at Subbarama's home, where often he would conduct akhanda kirtan (non-stop singing of the Lord's names) for a whole night or days at a time. In this atmosphere of devotion and artistry Kuppuswami and his parents joined the other devotees in bhajan, ecstatically dancing around the lamp deep into the night. Subbarama taught music to Kuppuswami and under such an inspiring teacher Kuppuswami soon knew by heart all the bhajans and kirtans.

Sri Appaya Dikshitar, one of the great names in the annals of spiritual literature in India, was an ancestor of both Subbarama and Kuppuswami. He was born in Adaipalam, near Arni, North Arcot District, South India. He is reputed to have written 104 works in Sanskrit. His works on vedanta (a great and popular system of Indian philosophy) show his intellectual abilities. All the schools of vedanta have drawn inspiration from his unique work.

In almost all the branches of Sanskrit literature, poetry, rhetoric and philosophy he was peerless, not only among his contemporaries, but even among scholars of several decades before and after him. His Kuvalayananda is generally regarded as one of the best works on rhetoric. His poems on Lord Siva are great favourites of the worshippers of Siva.

Sri Appaya was considered by many to be an incarnation of Lord Siva. Legend has it that when he went to the Tirupati temple in South India, the Vaishnavas who were in charge of the temple refused him admission, as he was a devotee of Lord Siva. But in the morning the image of Lord Vishnu was found to have changed itself into the form of Siva. The Vaishnavas were astounded and, begging Dikshitar's pardon, prayed to him to change the image again into the form of Vishnu which, the legend says, the great saint did.

Another great spiritual luminary was also born in the family of Appaya Dikshitar about half a century prior to Swami Sivananda, on the 3rd December 1831. He was Sundaresa Sivam. Though born of affluent parents, tragedy struck early in his life and he was orphaned. He was brought up by his maternal uncle who was a great devotee of Lord Siva, and a very learned man.

Sundaresa's hobby in boyhood was the worship of the Lord. He listened to his uncle's hymns and memorised them. Soon he mastered the Sanskrit language. He was forced into marriage but it did not last long, as his wife died. He left home and wandered as a sannyasi (monk). He helped several temples in South India and established a number of charities. He possessed miraculous powers. In 1878 he passed away. His 'samadhi' (tomb) is found even today in Arimalam near Pudukotai in South India. Swami Sivananda paid homage to this saintly ancestor during his All-India tour in 1950. (It is the belief of many that Swami Sivananda is a reincarnation of Sundara Swamigal — as Sundaresa Sivam came to be known after his renunciation).

During their time together, Kuppuswami and Subbarama Dikshitar shared many stories of their illustrious ancestors.

Next door to the house in which his parents lived was the house in which the renowned poet and patriot Shuddhananda Bharatiar lived. Thus in his boyhood Kuppuswami was literally surrounded by genius: great poets, composers, musicians and patriots.

One who knew the young Kuppuswami was Ganapathi Sastrigal. He related:

Kuppuswami was tall for his age, handsome and fair in complex-

ion, neither lean nor stout, with a little bulging belly. He had a smiling countenance always and was attractive even at that age. His face was quite like his mother's and his body was like his father's. He was very majestic in appearance. He had a small rudraksha seed covered with silver and tied to his holy thread. He was free with young boys like me and would converse with us in short English verses with a musical tone. He had much humour in him which had a special attraction for us.

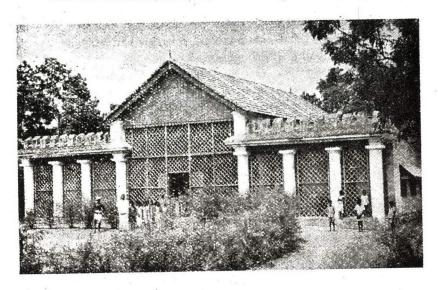
His special attention, even as a boy, was bestowed upon wandering monks. He took the greatest delight in entertaining them; they enjoyed special privileges at his hands. There was no beggar who called at his house who did not make the young boy run to him with love, wherever he might be at that time. He transcended all barriers and conventions by inviting beggars inside the house and feeding them or giving them plenty of rice and other victuals.

Once several youngsters were playing on the village street. An aged woman tripped and fell down. The youngsters giggled; the mischievous and happy Kuppuswami became suddenly stern and gave expression to wisdom far beyond his age: "Don't laugh; we shall grow in age. Can you imagine what you would look like at her age? When someone is in distress we should help and not laugh." One of the traits for which Kuppuswami had earned renown was his love of adventure. Without telling anyone he would go away from home, wander about for a few days, subsisting on almost no food on most occasions. He went away to Kazhugumalai once in this manner, without taking any money with him. At Kazhugumalai there was a temple dedicated to Lord Subramanya, where he worshipped the Lord. He did not have a morsel of food for over three days, but was sustained in full vigour by his enthusiasm for achievement. On the fourth day, as he was returning, a friend gave him some meagre fare which only had the effect of whetting Kuppuswami's appetite, far from quenching it. Finally he returned home. Only then did he realise that he had completely exhausted himself in this adventure.

He had run away thus so often that his mother had almost begun to know that if he had not returned home before nightfall he would have gone to some nearby shrine or sacred place, or he would be found sitting underneath the neem-tree which was his favourite place of seclusion.

Kuppuswami had no fear at all. We can't now guess what would

have been his mental condition in those days; but death had no meaning for him. He would playfully dive into a well and get back unhurt and cheerful. This was one of his favourite 'stunts' with which to astound his friends, if not to frighten his family.



When Kuppuswami reached the school-going age his father had him admitted to the Rajah's High School, Ettiapuram. Unlike other boys, he liked going to school and he could already read and recite the alphabet and the numbers in proper order. Ever-alert, he was quick to gather all the elementary knowledge at home while his elder brothers were struggling with their lessons. He did not like the idea of losing time.

Even as a boy he had been endowed with a keen intellect that could grasp anything without the least difficulty. He assimilated all the school lessons quite easily. He had never to be told a second time. This left him ample time and leisure at home. He would not spend time idly or in useless pastimes but, partly out of curiosity and partly out of an innate urge, he would go ahead with his lessons. This was especially the case during his college days, when he could with facility answer a problem which would perplex his seniors. He was thorough with his own class lessons and would compete with those four years senior to him.

In 1901 he was chosen to deliver an address on the occasion of the visit of Lord Amptill (the then Governor of Madras) to Kurumalai Hills;

and he also sang a beautiful welcome song on the platform of Kumarapuram railway station. This was at the age of fourteen, when most of his companions would have perspired even at the sight of a European Governor, not to mention the huge crowd! He acquitted himself with credit.

Kuppuswami realised very early in life that a sickly body is a burden. Sambasiva Iyer, the physical training instructor in Rajah's High School, lived in the same street, and Kuppuswami was his best pupil. During the All-India Tour in 1950 Sri Sambasiva Iyer went to see him in Tirunelveli, and said: "Swamiji was a very good gymnast and played well in parallel and horizontal bars in equal capacity to me." In fact, his proficiency earned him such a place in his teacher's heart that Sri Sambasiva Iyer would confidently ask him to take the class in his absence. (This good old man renewed his contact with the 'old student' later in life, and what is more remarkable, realising his divinity, became his disciple. Swamiji initiated him into the holy order of sannyasa with the name Swami Sadasivananda.)

As a gymnast of a superior order, Kuppuswami had a wonderful physique with well developed chest and strong arms. His orthodox parents did not view his gymnastics with any great favour, but the boy used to be up from bed as early as 3.00 or 3.30 a.m. and slip away before the rest of the household arose from slumber. "I have to confess," he once said, "that many times I used to place a pillow on my bed and cover it up carefully with a blanket to give the appearance of my innocent self sleeping soundly." He would at that time be in the gymnasium, absorbed in his vigorous pastimes.

From the Ettiapuram Rajah's High School he passed in 1903 into the S.P.G. College, Trichinopoly. He was as humble and obedient as he was intelligent and studious, and very soon he attracted the attention of the principal himself (the Rev. H. Packenham Walsh). The teachers and the principal all loved him. He was hard working and gained distinctions in every examination, being especially proficient in Tamil literature. He passed very creditably in the Tamil examination held by the Tamil Sangham of Madurai in 1905 for students for First in Arts (F.A.) examination.

His taste for music, his bold deportment and obvious sincerity qualified him admirably for winning acclaim as an amateur actor, when he played the role of Helena in Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, staged in the college.

Kuppuswami always stood first in the class. He won many prizes

and medals too. These prizes used to reach him in the form of valuable books and with them he built up a small library. Acquisition of books for his own study as well as for others was a habit which he developed at this stage.

MEDICAL CAREER

On completion of his studies there were three avenues open to Kuppuswami — arts, science and medicine. He had no problem in choosing medicine. Thus he came to embark on a career which was to train him for the path he was later to tread. He applied his one-pointed energies to the task on hand and out-shone his class-mates and even his seniors. Soon he acquired such a mastery over the subject that his professors were amazed. Even during the first year he had free access to the operation theatres, to assist the surgeons. This afforded him further opportunities of acquiring more and more knowledge.

Kuppuswami was fired with an inexplicable zeal and enthusiasm and he worked like one possessed. He would always have a small memoranda book with him in which he would jot down anything of importance that came to his notice. Occasionally he would draw lessons from occurences which must have influenced his future attitude towards life in general.

He showed signs of his future greatness even in his scholastic career. He would cover the subjects of two years' study in one year itself. On the eve of his examination he would close his books and quietly sit. He would then score top marks in almost every subject. He could repeat word for word anything read out to him from any book; so much so that he was an object of envy and admiration in the eyes of his co-pupils and professors. His love, truth and honesty impressed all who came in contact with him.

Of this, perhaps the most eventful period in his early life, he himself says in his autobiography:

I was a tremendously industrious boy in school. During my studies at the Tanjore Medical Institute I never used to go home during the holidays. I would spend the entire period working in the hospital and learning many new lessons. I had free admission to the operating theatre. I would run here and there and acquire knowledge of surgery which only a senior student would possess. An old Assistant Surgeon had to appear for a departmental test; he used to make me read his textbooks for him. This enabled me to compete with the senior students in theoretical proficiency. I was first in all subjects.

I had heard of an enterprising assistant in the Mannargudi Hospital. I wanted to become like him. With all humility, I may mention that I possessed greater knowledge than many doctors with covetable degrees. At home my mother and brothers would try to persuade me to take up some work in some other line, but I was adamant in my resolve to stick to the medical line, as I had a great liking for it. All my leisure hours were spent in studying all kinds of medical books.

In the first years of my study in the medical school I could answer papers which the final year student could not. I topped the class in all subjects.

On emerging with brilliant colours from the medical college, Dr. Kuppuswami looked out for a channel to direct his surging passion to be of some substantial service to humanity at large, and to share the financial burden of the household which had fallen on his brothers at the death of his father. He joined a doctor in Trichinopoly, as his assistant.

Dr. Kuppuswami was ever dynamic and ever active. Though not ambitious enough to accumulate much money, he knew no contentment in the matter of service. He considered that day an utter failure if an opportunity to render service had been overlooked.

Even as a young man his child-like nature had a special power of its own for drawing out others. When the patients came to him they would at once sense his simple nature and pour out their hearts to him without the least reservation. This made his task all the more easy; because the freedom which they enjoyed with him enabled them to put before him a full and frank history of their complaints.

Rendering service to the suffering who are near at hand is, no doubt, a praiseworthy form of service, but other sick people needed help and what was more important, the masses had to be taught how not to fall ill!

In his autobiography he writes:

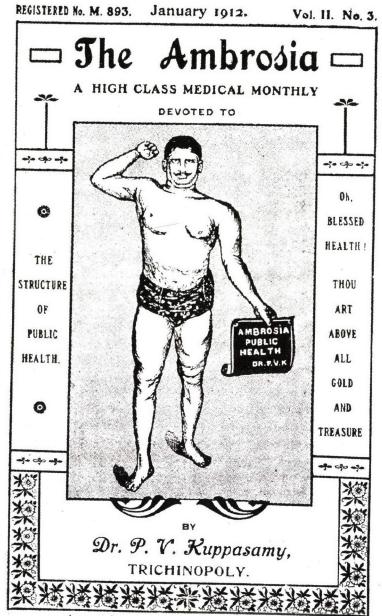
I hit upon a plan that I should start a medical journal. I soon worked out the details. I got from my mother one hundred rupees for the initial expenses. I used to approach ayurvedic physicians for articles on ayurveda, an ancient Indian medical system. I myself used to write articles on various themes and publish them in the 'Ambrosia' under different pseudonyms. The magazine quickly gained popularity soon after its inception in 1909, and many distinguished people started contributing to it. Once my mother wanted to celebrate some festival and was in need of about one hundred and fifty rupees to meet the expenses. I was ready with this sum.

The 'Ambrosia' journal was successfully run for four years until I sailed for Malaya. It was of demi-quarto size with thirty-two pages to each issue and was quite beautifully got up. The material that its contents presented to the reader every month was attractive and highly useful to all medical practitioners. A significant spiritual touch could be felt in the pages of the 'Ambrosia'. Unlike other, medical journals, the entire outlook was based on the teachings of the sages of yore. Spirituality was ingrained in me even in my vouth.

Extraordinarily, Dr. Kuppuswami was business-like in the conduct of the journal. He invited and accepted commercial advertisements, being paid Rs.3/- for a full page advertisement. Yet, as it grew in popularity, the income grew and the expenditure grew beyond the income. The method of conducting the journal was business-like, but the handling of the financial side was not quite so! Yet the primary object of the journal was dissemination of knowledge. That it did not bring him an income did not matter, but that it was eating away his scanty financial resources did matter. Dr. Kuppuswami was a great success with his patients; but an utter failure in money-making. He would ignore sending bills and give away medicines free of charge.

Besides editing the 'Ambrosia', the doctor found another delightful occupation for filling up whatever time he still had in his busy day. He would give medical advice by post. With the help of these, the budding doctor healed the sick; and by giving instructions on hygiene and rules of health he enabled people to ward off diseases and to maintain perfect

health, full vigour and vitality.



Annual Subscription Rs 3. Students Rs. 2.

Cover page of 'Ambrosia'



Young Doctor Kuppuswami

Dr. Kuppuswami was in search of a job to maintain himself and the journal. He went to Madras and joined Dr. Haller's Pharmacy. He revealed this part of his life one day when a worker in the ashram neglected some service, feeling that it was not part of the duties allotted to him. Swamiji then referred to his work in Haller's Pharmacy: "There I had to manage the accounts, dispense medicines, attend on patients: very hard work I had to do. I would finish all this and yet find time to continue my journal. From Madras I would send the journal free to various people who benefited by it."

Kuppuswami felt more and more the need to widen his field of service and to come into direct contact with the needy. When Dr. Haller and his partner Dr. Damry decided to dissolve their partnership he saw his opportunity to make a radical change in his life. He wrote to a friend in Singapore, Dr. Iyengar, that he was planning to go to Malaya as he knew that there was great need of his services there.

When he broached the subject in the household, the first impact was too severe for everybody and they burst into tears. An adept in handling delicate situations even at that age, he let the situation cool down. Then he brought home to them the lofty ideals he held before himself. He dexterously mixed philosophy with humour. Though a doctor of medicine

he was an expert pleader; his sweet disposition made him a master of effective persuasion. The mother saw that beneath the cloak of a smiling countenance there lurked an iron will and an adamantine determination. She and his elder brother argued in many ways. "Crossing the seas is prohibited by the scriptures," they said. But Dr. Kuppuswami was beyond the reach of superstition. He replied that those rules did not apply to the present day world, and that in search of fields of service, he should, if necessary, ignore all the conventional rules of conduct. To him the call of sick and suffering humanity was the call of the Lord Himself. Should he then hide himself behind conventions and refuse to respond? The very idea was preposterous to him. The mother and the brother were convinced. He got their blessing and approval.

With a cheerful face lit with a smile of contentment, he bade adieu to his friends and relatives, who struggled to check the tears that gathered in their eyes. They blessed him and wished him godspeed in his noble mission. He, on his part, felt that a heavy and oppressing burden had been lifted off his shoulders; with a light heart brimming with joy and thankfulness to God, he sent up a silent prayer to the Almighty to guide him in the path, as He willed.

On the eve of his departure from India, Dr. Kuppuswami (who had been nicknamed by his friends as Dr. Ambrosia) was given a farewell party by his friends. The renowned Maharishi Shuddhananda Bharatiar was present at this party in Madurai in 1913. He recalled how deeply the young doctor was imbued with altruistic principles of unselfish service to the sick and the suffering.

Malaya

Dr. Kuppuswami left Madras by the S.S. Tara in the year 1913. Even during the voyage he was ever alert, ever on the look out for opportunities for service. He had the stethoscope and the 'Doctor's Kit' always by his side. He never stood on formalities. He would watch a man sneeze or groan, and he would immediately run to him and ask him what the matter was, and treat him. His transparent sincerity would break the reserve of even a reticent man and enslave him.

At other times he would be seen pacing the deck, deep in thought. He would often sit still like a statue, gazing at the sky, the vast expanse of water and the waves playing over it. The scorching sun, the rising vapour and the gathering clouds would all throw him into a contemplative mood. It was a bold adventure as he had no money to fall back on in case of a reverse in his expectations. However, he had tremendous hope, strength of

will and fiery determination.

No easy-going prospect awaited Dr. Kuppuswami in the distant land of Malaya, as he was altogether unknown and friendless. He had to start from scratch and encounter disappointing setbacks in the beginning, but later events turned out much in his favour and he felt his position secure.

From his orthodox family of the brahmin caste, he inherited orthodox habits and ideas, one of which forbade him from eating in hotels and restaurants. Anticipating the trouble on board the ship which brought him to Malaya from South India, he had with him a small quantity of 'laddu', an Indian sweetmeat. He ate these laddus and drank water throughout the voyage. This was an extremely unsatisfactory state of affairs; and, judging by the 'health' of his appetite in his sixties, he would have enjoyed excellent appetite in those days. Thus, when he landed in Malaya (we believe that he landed in Penang) and almost immediately rushed to Seramban by train, he had almost reached the end of his physical endurance. Yet again, his will was so strong that he would not rest nor find food he could eat till he had found the person he sought — Dr. Iyengar, the doctor in charge of the Rubber Estates Medical Service. Dr. Iyengar gave him a letter of introduction to an acquaintance of his, Dr. Harold Parsons, a medical practitioner in Seramban, the capital of Negri Sembilan.

Dr. Kuppuswami went straight to the doctor's office in the town. The doctor was away; his brother, Mr. Wilfred Parsons, told him that the doctor had gone to the estate, so he decided to move on to the Estate itself to meet the doctor. His strength gave way. But where could he find proper food to eat? He came across a person from Malabar (India) who was kind enough to direct him to a temple where an offering of curd and rice was available.

"The temple priests were not so hospitable, but somehow I managed to take some rice and curd; this greatly refreshed me," Swamiji later told us with a grateful smile. This remote incident might have then and there kindled the spark of his principle never to refuse food to anybody, a principle that he dutifully maintained always.

Senawang Estate

When Kuppuswami finally arrived at the Senawang Estate he found that Dr. Parsons was not in need of an assistant, but the good doctor was so impressed by Kuppuswami that he took him to Mr. A.G. Robins, the manager of the Senawang Estate, which had its own hospital.

Fortunately Mr. Robins just then needed an assistant to work in the



This was the Estate Hospital

Estate Hospital, as the previous one (who was incompetent) had just left. Mr. Robins was a man with a violent temper, a giant figure, tall and stout. He asked Dr. Kuppuswami "Can you manage a hospital all by yourself?" He replied, "Yes, I can manage even three hospitals." He was appointed at once. He had been told by a local Indian resident that he ought not to accept, in accordance with their policy, anything less than a hundred dollars a month. Mr. Robins agreed to give him one hundred and fifty dollars to start with.

Malaria was common in those days, and even the manager of the Estate had an enlarged spleen and went about the Estate in a rickshaw. The establishment which supplied the Estate with medical care was known as 'Dr. Parsons and Glenny' and it had its central office in Seramban. In each estate there was a small hospital, with a hospital assistant in charge. Dr. E. Glenny visited these hospitals once a week.

Dr. Kuppuswami was put in charge of the hospital in Senawang. He quickly acquired a good knowledge of the hospital equipment and the stock of medicines, and was absorbed in the job. Here again, hard work awaited him. He had to dispense medicine, in addition to keeping accounts and personally attending to patients as he did for Dr. Haller in Madras. He was energetic and active. He would give free tuition and quickly train people for the post of hospital assistant.

The rubber estate was a small world in itself. It had its own post office, railway station, dispensary, shop, temple, etc. Rubber trees could be seen everywhere, with a small cup tied to each trunk to collect its juice. There were about one thousand trees per acre. The average estate might have anything from one thousand to three thousand acres. In those days the entire work force was composed of Tamilians from South India. Every estate employed a minimum of four to five thousand workers. This was to be Dr. Kuppuswami's little world for the next seven years. It was his laboratory in which he conducted spiritual and altruistic experiments. It was his universe. It was the university in which he graduated to Self-realisation.

In 1967 Swami Venkatesananda, a disciple of Swami Sivananda, made a pilgrimage to the district and recorded his impressions:

About six miles from Seramban is the Senawang Estate. On the roadside we saw two buildings: these (or their simpler predecessors) had housed the young doctor from India and witnessed his self-transformation into a sage and mystic. It was here that the doctor came face to face with the vital problems of life and death, the extremes of pain and pleasure, and learnt the eternal Truth from life itself. Dr. Paramasivam explained that the house in which Kuppuswami lived was made of planks, as most of the 'old' houses in Malaya were; this had been pulled down and in its place stood a new house. Very near this house stood a large building; it was even larger in those days. Then it was the hospital; now it is a school. There were a few beds in the two (male and female) wards in the hospital, and critical cases were almost always kept in the doctor's own house.

From the very start anyone and everyone found out the marked difference between Dr. Kuppuswami's behaviour and that of other doctors. With him their behaviour, too, was different. Diplomacy was completely absent in him. He would deal with everyone with the same attitude of open-hearted straightforwardness. The staff in the hospital found in him a good champion of their cause; and they could repose their fullest confidence in him. So, too, felt the superior officers.

Dr. Kuppuswami's service to the poor labourers was remembered for over half a century by them. Dr. Paramasivam, who used to work in a neighbouring estate, recalled an extraordinary trait: "When he treated his patients he examined them thoroughly and



Swami Venkatesananda with Sri Arumugam

gave medicines, no doubt, but he did something more. He gave each of his patients a tulasi (holy basil) leaf and a few drops of holy water. He had a tulasi plant in front of his house and he was regular in his daily worship. He kept the tulasi leaves and the holy water he used for the worship and gave them to the patients. He had remarkable success with them."

An aged labourer in the Estate, Sri Arumugam, recalled the young doctor's services: "I remember him very well. There was something which distinguished him from everyone else. He would never address us discourteously but always used the respectful form of address. I have never heard him utter a harsh or angry word; he was kindness personified. He looked after poor labourers with special care. He would give us medicines, food and money too. He always prayed while attending to patients and gave them tulasi and holy water. Every Friday he held a prayer in the hospital. After the prayer he would distribute prasad. He would then go round the wards and give the prasad to those who could not leave their beds, and he himself put it in their mouths. He was a tall and handsome young man with an arresting personality not easy to forget."

This old man's emphasis was on the respect and courtesy with which the young doctor, in spite of his social status and birthcaste, treated the labourers, all of whom belonged to what was then an inferior caste and social status. It is a bit difficult for us to understand the significance of this in these days of social equality, but to this old man the doctor's behaviour was already the dawn of a new era of equality and mutual respect.

Johore

Dr. Kuppuswami served in the Seramban Estate Hospital for nearly seven years, after which he joined the Johore Medical Office Ltd. at the request of Dr. Parsons, who had by then returned from overseas military service.

In Johore Medical Office, again his assistants used to take undue advantage of his kindness and leniency and were super-lethargic in their duties. He had to do all their work as well and he could not even complain of overwork lest his employers would be harsh towards the assistants. The problem of overwork was never solved in Malaya, or during his life-time.

Of this period, he said:

In Malaya I came into direct contact with hundreds of poor people, indentured labourers as well as the local citizens. I learned the Malayan language and conversed with the people in their own tongue. I served the workers of the Estate nicely and endeared myself to them all. I was always fond of service. One moment I would be in the hospital: and the very next moment in some poor patient's house to attend on him and his family. Dr. Parsons, who was a visiting physician to the Estate hospital, loved me very much. I used to assist him in his private work also. Off and on I gave my earnings to help friends and the patients. I even went to the extent of pawning some of my own valuables for this purpose.

Dr. Kuppuswami was a friend of both the management and the labourers. Once there was a strike by the scavengers working in the hospital. The superintendent and other officials were fretting and furning with rage. Coolly Dr. Kuppuswami called the ring leaders and persuaded them to resume work, assuring them of redress. He then acquainted himself with their demands and approached the higher authorities. There he began to plead the scavengers' case so ably that they had to yield. They themselves could not explain how the doctor won the day. He was so

sincere in the espousal of the cause, so straightforward and so sympathetic! In addition to all this he would help his assistants and train them for some time daily, and then send them to other hospitals with a recommendation letter, providing from his pocket their railway fare as well as some pocket money. He became well known in Seramban and Johore. The bank manager would oblige him at any time, even on holidays, by honouring his cheques. He became everybody's friend through his sociable disposition and service. He got rapid promotions and with that his salary and private practice increased by leaps and bounds. All this was not achieved in a single day. It meant very hard work, unflagging tenacity, strenuous effort and undiminishing faith in the principles of goodness and virtue and their practical application.

He carefully attended on all patients, but never demanded fees from them. He felt happy when they were free from disease and trouble. To serve people and to share what he had was his inborn nature. He used to cheer people up with his wit and humour, and elevate the sick with loving and encouraging words. The sick persons at once felt a new health, hope, spirit, vigour and vitality. Everywhere people declared that he had a special gift from God for the miraculous cure effected in the patients, and acclaimed him as a very kind and sympathetic doctor with a charming and majestic personality. In serious cases he used to keep vigil at night by remaining at the patient's bedside. In the company of the sick, he understood their feelings and endeavoured to relieve their sufferings.

Dr. Kuppuswami soon rose in the estimation of his fellow-doctors and superiors at the hospital — who loved, admired and respected him for his kindly nature, gentlemanly behaviour and spirit of selfless service. He was their 'right hand' and they soon found out that they could repose the fullest confidence in him. The entire management of the hospital thus gradually glided into his hands. He was given a bungalow inside the hospital compound itself, and this enabled him to devote as much time and attention as he wished to the hospital work. His own personal comforts he would attend to with quick despatch, only to rush to the hospital. There was no such thing as 'off-duty' for him. He was perpetually 'on duty'; and excused himself only a few moments in the morning and at night for food and rest. This earned for him a fair name which spread like wild-fire throughout Malaya. His sincerity, thoroughness of attention, spirit of worshipful service and that 'something' that always emanated from him, brought about almost miraculous cures in some of his patients who were suffering from diseases pronounced incurable by able doctors. This drew to the hospital many

people suffering from dire physical maladies, mostly from the poorer sections of the community. All this to him meant the fulfilment of his own desires: to serve, serve and serve till his physical frame withered away in service. He always kept up a cheerful face, and was ever ready to receive patients. For everyone he had a smile — particularly for the poor.

Dr. Kuppuswami recognised the poor as the very embodiment of God on earth. Poverty may be a curse or a blessing. A religious man may gladly embrace poverty for the sake of salvation, while a materialist would on the contrary employ all his genius and energy to get rid of it, and to adore Mammon as his god. But to Dr. Kuppuswami poverty presented a blessed opportunity to develop his heart. The poor needed his service more than the aristocrats who could do without his physical aid. If a poor man living in a slum fell a victim to a disease — the product of the conditions in which he was forced to live — Kuppuswami would take this patient up himself, provide for him a bed in his own home if need be, and treat him with all the care that a member of his own family could claim from him. He would employ a nurse to be in constant attendance and would himself run up to his bedside whenever he found a few moments' leisure from the hospital duties. When the man got well, the doctor would give him some money and send him off.

During those days of medical service in Malaya the young doctor was the biblical Samaritan carried to the degree of perfection. He effaced himself. His energy, his talents and his body he did not consider as belonging to him — he belonged to any creature who was in distress and in need of him. He would not spare himself. It happened once that a humble woman of low caste, a pariah (untouchable) was about to give birth. She had no-one to call her own and to be of help. This young doctor, a brahmin of a most celebrated family, was at once by her side, all tenderness and sympathy, more solicitous than if she were his own sister. He looked to her comforts, eased her as best he could and, as the necessity arose, kept vigil that night, stretching himself down on the earth and passing the night thus outside the door of her lowly dwelling. Only when the task on hand was concluded did he return home and think of himself. It was this inherent thirst to befriend all, to relieve pain, to lessen sorrow, to console and comfort, that animated his life.

Once a patient suffering from a severe throat disease came to the doctor, who examined him. He found that the surgical resources at his disposal at the local hospital were inadequate to cure this man. At once he wrote a personal letter to one of his friends in the Singapore Hospital, gave the patient a ticket to Singapore with quite a decent amount of

money, and sent him to the hospital with directions to present the letter to his friend. The doctors in the bigger and better equipped hospitals had so much high regard for Dr. Kuppuswami that they paid special attention to patients referred to them by him. The patient returned completely cured. He had had tracheotomy done and a button-hole fixed in front of the throat.

Dr. Kuppuswami was happy that the patient was cured; and happier to learn about the tracheotomy. He felt that the case was important enough to call for wide publicity. He wrote all the details of the case in the form of an informative article and had it published in several newspapers.

He also wrote other articles on diverse topics for the Malay Tribune. He used to purchase the newspaper, because by that other people were persuaded to buy it and this gave livelihood to a struggling news vendor. Though he was never interested in the daily news of the world, occasionally he used to go through the editorial and tried to strengthen his command of English. He was never interested in politics. Football, cricket and such games were then completely unknown to him.

Dr. Kuppuswami became a Member of the Royal Institute of Public Health (M.R.I.P.H.), London, and an Associate of Royal Sanitary Institute (A.R.San.I), London. During his stay in Malaya he published some medical books such as Household Remedies, Fruits and Health, Diseases and their Tamil Terms, Obstetric Ready-Reckoner, and Fourteen Lessons on Public Health.

Life With The Doctor

One of the eye-witnesses of the doctor's life in Johore was Sri Narasimha Iyer, who served him as his cook in Malaya (and later in the Himalayas too).

This is what happened to Sri Narasimha Iyer on his first day of service with the doctor. In the evening when he arrived, the doctor put his bed on the floor and pointed to a cot placed in the same room and said to Sri Narasimha Iyer: "You lie down there." That was too much for the cook! But his remonstrance was of no avail. "It is very unhealthy to lie down on the floor in these parts. I have become accustomed to this. But you should not take the risk." He never gave the option to Narasimha Iyer to disobey him.

Next day, for the first meal, Narasimha Iyer very reverently and dutifully placed a wooden plank on the floor and a silver plate in front of it. He was ready to serve. But the master had a different idea. He said, "You also sit down now, along with me." To Narasimha Iyer, it was



Dr Kuppuswami in Malaysia

strange sitting with his master and taking food.

"Sit on my left side. Place all the preparations in the middle. We will serve ourselves and eat together." They began thus and the turn for ghee came. The doctor took a little out of a small cup of ghee placed on his left side, then emptied the rest of it in Narasimha Iyer's plate with astonishing rapidity. The technique was repeated when the turn for serving curd came. Narasimha Iyer now understood why the doctor had asked him to sit on his left side. It would facilitate the doctor's service of the cook!

"What is the difference between you and me? You earn a little less and I earn a little more, that is all. Both of us take the same food, we both have to sleep, and in every other aspect of life we both have the same characteristics. Why then should you wait for me to take food? Are you not feeling hungry at the same time? Why should you stand before me? Your legs are as much subject to pain as mine. Why should you go about in dirty clothes? You have as much self-respect as I have, and the same principles of health and hygiene apply to both of us. Foolish ideas of superiority and inferiority are entertained by some arrogant rich men. I know their habits. They will reserve spoilt food and stale bananas for their servants. I loathe even the thought. You shall be one of the members of my family. In future do not feel any reservation with me." This was the doctor's first sermon to his cook.

It was this that kindled the curiosity in the heart of Sri Narasimha Iyer to watch his master more closely. It was the feeling he had then that his master was out of the ordinary, that is responsible for what he was able to convey to us about Swamiji's life in Malaya after more than twenty years.

Sri Narasimha Iyer completed his first month of service under the doctor. The salary that had been agreed upon was 25 dollars, 'all found'. On the morning of the first of the next month the doctor ran into the kitchen and handed over an envelope containing 35 dollars to Narasimha Iyer. Narasimha Iyer could not make out the reason for the extra 10 dollars. Perhaps they were for some purchases to be made that day? He looked at the doctor. "That is your sambhavana," clarified the doctor, and asked, "Is it enough?" ('Sambhavana' has a holy association and means an offering made with devotion and reverence.) Narasimha Iyer said that he never heard the words 'salary', 'pay' or 'wages' from the doctor when he paid the servants their dues. Even then he looked upon his servants as God. Whatever he gave them was an offering unto God by him.

Narasimha Iyer took to the study of religious books; during intervals



Swamiji's cook, Narasimha Iyer

from work, he would pore over some Tamil saint's works. The doctor would suddenly peep into the kitchen. "What is that? Pattinathar's life? Have you read this?" (In a sing-song voice he would repeat a verse or two, with friendly gestures, just as a child would run to its father and proudly recite a piece of poetry which he had learned from school that day). If the doctor noticed that Narasimha Iyer was still uneasy in his presence he would retreat, saying: "Read on, read on. It is a very good book."

Towards the close of the period of his service with the doctor, Narasimha Iyer expressed the desire to be photographed with the master, as a memento. At once the doctor shot out of the house and came back within a few minutes with the information that the photographer was ready. He gave his own suit to Narasimha Iyer for him to wear and took him to the studio.

Narasimha Iyer had by this time reconciled himself to the pleasant but unusual nature of his master. The doctor himself arranged the chair, and other details.

When the shooting was over, he remarked smilingly: "You look like a lawyer in that dress," and gave a hearty laugh. They both returned to the house. Narasimha Iyer was at his post of duty again, with a towel around his waist, busy making rice-paste for rice-cakes. The doctor hurried into the kitchen and (amidst laughter) said, "You are exceedingly charming now, Narasimha Iyer. Shall I call the photographer now?" He gave another hearty laugh and went away.

To make such friendly jokes was a habit with him, but even in the seeming fun there would always be a hidden lesson for the discerning. He could never bring himself to treat servants as servants. He loved them and

played with them: to him they were his equals.

The basic urge in him to share what he had with others became irresistible when the object to be shared was something extraordinary. Narasimha Iyer gave us the following example:

One day the doctor entered the kitchen when Narasimha Iyer was preparing green-banana curry. Even when it was in the pan, the doctor took out a few pieces and started eating, all the time saying: "Oh, Narasimha Iyer! What do these rich people know of happiness? What happiness do these princes know and enjoy? Look at this! Is there anything equal to this in the world?" Soon the excellence of the preparation prompted him to exclaim that it was a first-rate curry. With a saucer and spoon in hand, he ran to the telephone. He had remembered his friend, Subramanya Iyer, to whom green-banana curry was as dear as life itself. "Oh Subramanya Iyer! You know what I am doing now? Eating a first-class green-banana curry. Yes, I shall send you immediately it is out of the oven. No, no, I tasted it even before it was taken out! My new cook, Narasimha Iyer, a stalwart figure with a towel round his waist, will bring it to your house just now. He does not know the place; so be on the lookout." Cooking was over and Narasimha Iyer asked the doctor if he would take his food. "First take a plateful of the vegetable and give it to Subramanya Iyer. Do you know the house? No? Ask somebody on the road. Take it to him first and then we shall eat." (This is Swamiji's novel interpretation of the term 'give and take'. First give a share of what you have to others and then take yours!).

Here are a few incidents illustrative (though not exhaustive) of Dr.

Kuppuswami's love, kindness and giving nature:

"Oh, noble Sir," wailed a beggar in the street, "I am hungry and have had no food for the last two days. I am near death. I have cried at every door. Alas! Who can understand my suffering? Even God seems to be cruel, because He is bent on prolonging this miserable existence." He was about to beat his head and fall down.

Though all this was not addressed to him, Dr. Kuppuswami patted the beggar on the back, and led him to his own compound. "Rest here for

a few minutes. Oh, Narasimha Iyer, bring half the rice and other preparations. Take a good leaf, put it over the plate. Then arrange all the items nicely on it and bring them here at once. Quickly, quickly." Narasimha Iyer went in and brought the food.

"Here you are, old man! Take this food and refresh yourself." The beggar was unable to believe his own eyes. He rubbed them to make sure that he was not dreaming.

"Come on, why do you hesitate?" Moved with gratitude, the beggar began to eat his feast. Occasional tears escaped his eyes, though he tried to check them. Dinner finished, the beggar washed his hands as the tall doctor stood by his side and poured out the water. Before the doctor realised what the other man was doing, he fell flat before him and hugged his feet. The doctor sent him away with pocket money, enough to feed him for a couple of days, in case of need.

Narasimha Iyer, who was watching all this, was unable to make anything of it. The doctor turned to him and said: "Come on, let us take our food now." What could poor Narasimha Iyer do? He had prepared food for only two. Half of that had been given to the beggar. "You may take your food. I shall prepare some again and eat later," replied Narasimha Iyer. Quickly came the retort: "No, no. It does not matter. We shall share what there is between us. What does it matter if we have to take half the usual quantity one day? Hunger is the same in every person. By giving it to the beggar we have appeased hunger; whether it is his or ours it is all the same." Immediately he sat down for lunch.

Narasimha Iyer recollected another incident similar to the above. A beggar came to the doctor's bungalow and prayed for a few coppers to buy food. After ascertaining from Narasimha Iyer that food would not be ready soon, the doctor ran to the door and asked: "How much have you to pay for a meal?" The beggar casually replied: "Thirty cents, Sir." The big hand at once dived into the coat pocket and brought out a fifty-cent piece. "Here you are! Take this and have a good meal. Is that enough?"

The beggar was wonderstruck. He rarely got such treatment. His lot had always been kicks and abuse. Here was one who would give a lot of money and would further ask him: "Is that enough?" Seeing him stand dumbfounded, the doctor repeated his question, jingling his pocket all the time, as if impatient at the man not asking for more. Out came another fifty-cent piece. "Here, take this. Don't hesitate to come to me again if the money is insufficient for the meal."

Narasimha Iyer told us the story of an educated young man, Subramania, aged twenty-four, who had come to Malaya in search of employment. He went to Singapore and met a prominent South Indian gentleman who at once directed him to Dr. Kuppuswami in Johore, with the remark, "Go to this doctor, he will do everything for you. He is the kindest and noblest gentleman you can find in these parts. If he cannot do anything for you, then I am afraid no-one else can." The young man entered the doctor's compound with mixed feelings in his heart: pessimism generated by past experience and an inexplicable hope and joy. The doctor had gone out for a walk with Narasimha Iyer. It was nightfall when he returned. Immediately he went to the young man and asked him what he could do for him. Subramania explained to the doctor the purpose of his visit and requested him to assist him in securing a job. The doctor's response surprised him. "Oh yes," replied the doctor, "surely I will see that you are fixed up. Now come in. You can stay with me for the present and make yourself quite at home. Come, let us take our food." The young man's feelings had better be imagined!

He stayed; and he was treated by the doctor as his own brother. One full month passed. Then the doctor took upon himself the task of getting him a job. By finding him a job immediately on arrival, he did not want to give the impression that he was eager to get rid of him. He asked one of his friends in the railways to fix him up and it was done in a few days. The young man joined the service on a salary of 40 dollars a month. He wondered if he would be asked to find his own lodging. At dinner time the doctor opened the topic of his own accord, and in his own inimitable way told the young man that he need never think of going. Subramania stayed for another month. He got his first month's salary. Then he himself thought he must stand on his own feet. Guessing the mental condition of his guest, the doctor agreed.

The very next day the doctor found him a moderately rented and decent flat to live in. He arranged for his personal effects to be removed there, asked Narasimha Iyer to supply him foodstuffs for one month and all the cooking utensils necessary. He assured Subramania that he had himself told the shopkeeper to allow him any credit he wanted. On top of this came the assurance that in case of need he should not hesitate to call upon the doctor.

It was not that the other man ought to be grateful for the little help rendered, but always "Have I done all that I could and therefore should have done?"

He gave Subramania a grand parting feast and escorted him to the new house.

The doctor never forgot the difficulties he had encountered on his

arrival in Malaya; anyone who found himself in a similar position found in him a ready and eager helper. He would always keep a lot of coins of all denominations in his pocket. While pacing the verandah of his house or as he walked along the road, his hands would be jingling the coins to remind him of their presence. He would be sorry if one morning he had not given out the usual quota.

Sri Seetharama Iyer, of Malaya, recalls: "His ways were strange. He was always bubbling with joy. He had a smile for all, a kind word for everyone. He could never entertain a thought of high or low; he treated everyone alike. If he met a labourer on the road he would stop and chat in a friendly manner for a couple of minutes and then pass on. We, who had different standards of behaviour, would often find fault with him. He would quickly brush aside our criticism, saying: 'Imagine what a great joy he derives by my talking to him on equal terms! What do I lose by giving him that joy; on the contrary, I also get some delight.' He would dress himself like a prince and talk to labourers on equal terms; this was truly the mark of a saint, though we did not understand it at that time."

In business dealings, bargaining was unknown to him. Sometimes Narasimha Iyer would accompany his master to the bazaar. Whatever the shop-keeper demanded the doctor would pay without any word. Narasimha Iyer pointed out on the first occasion itself that the doctor ought not to do that. He explained that because the customers were bargaining, the vendors quoted a higher price than that which they themselves expected. The doctor retorted, "It does not matter. I cannot bargain. He is a poor man. Let him have a few cents more than what he deserves. Once he understands my nature, he will himself abandon the habit of quoting a higher price."

Dr Kuppuswami always took the 'other man' at his word. He never questioned and never suspected. Once he wanted to purchase a car. Somebody took some money from him for this purpose, and the doctor found out much later that he did not mean to negotiate the purchase of a car for him! "It does not matter," he said, "God willed it that way." He was candid, straightforward, simple and open-hearted. Diplomacy and double-dealing were not known to him.

He had a great liking for high-class dress, and he had a collection of fancy articles of gold, silver and sandalwood. Sometimes he used to purchase various kinds of gold rings and necklaces and wear them all at a time. When he entered shops he never used to waste any time in selection, but gathered all that he saw. He paid the shopkeeper's bill without scrutiny. He had many hats, but never wore them, though

sometimes he used his felt cap and the silk turban like a Rajput prince.

A friend from Malaya, Sri Seetharama Iyer, on a visit to Rishikesh recalled: "He always wore costly clothes. His wardrobe consisted of silk clothes only, but he wore them with utter indifference. He would never give the silk the respect that was due to it. He would just throw them on as though they were rags.

"He had a great fancy for jewellery. He had a gold neck-chain; and he had at least ten rings for his ten fingers. One fine morning he would put them on and walk about; the next they would disappear into his box, to be forgotten for months together. He had his own varieties in turbanstyle."

The boy Kuppuswami used to listen devoutly to recitations from the scriptures. As a youth, the small library of books on yoga that he then possessed grew with each visit to a book-stall. He took this treasure with him to Malaya.

In Malaya he methodically added to the wealth of the spiritual books he had. Narasimha Iyer related that the doctor would always keep with him a list of these books. He would take this list to a bookshop occasionally, leave it there and ask the bookseller to send him all the books available in the shop which were not on the list. Some of the books were in languages which were foreign to the doctor, but his reason for buying them was that others would be benefited. Whatever he could he read with great interest and delight. From the very first day Narasimha Iyer began to serve him, the master introduced him to the library and encouraged him to read religious and spiritual books. He would create a deep interest in everyone who came in contact with him, to read the books he had.

So, his library was open to everyone who claimed a love for those books. His amiable nature attracted to him a large circle of friends and they all became members of his library. This resulted in a two-fold satsang for the doctor. The books themselves formed a galaxy of saints who kept him company throughout his leisure moments. More important than even this: at home or at the hospital, in the bazaar or on the beach, he always had friends whose interest in common with him was spirituality. Very few minutes were spent in conversing on other topics. Everyone would greet him with "In that book by that yogi, it is said that ..." and a lively discussion would take place. These discussions would often throw the doctor into a deep reverie, when he would dive into the ocean of spiritual knowledge in quest of the pearl of Truth. Narasimha Iyer said that the doctor would spend the greater part of many nights in this fashion, either walking on the lawn around the house, or 'reflecting' in

his own study. The transient nature of the world, the fleeting character of time, the endless succession of pleasure and pain and the attraction and repulsion that form the basis of life and all creation, were constantly uppermost in his mind. He found that suffering was everyone's inevitable companion. The beggar on the roadside, the leper at the street-corner, the wailing patients in the hospital, the poverty-stricken people suffering in silence, constantly reminded him of human suffering.

As days passed by he turned more and more inwards, in search of that which would last, the enduring amidst the fleeting, the permanent amongst the transient. He was often lost to the world in such meditations.

He decided to practise yoga. For, as Thomas A. Kempis said: "Of what use is a cart-load of knowledge if even a particle of it is not going to be put to practical use?"

He took up the *Gita* and casually opened it. There it was! 'Having been born in this transient and misery-laden world, worship Me'. He prayed "Oh Lord, Thou hast most graciously solved my problem for me!" Then and there he made up his mind to spend more and more of his time in singing the Lord's names, in silently repeating the mantra, in formal and informal worship and in the study of the glorious lives of His devotees.

He started to hold prayer-meetings (satsang), in the hospital in Senawang Estate. In Johore Bahru it became a regular feature every night. He had been endowed with a sweet voice of which even the best musician could have been envious. He now thought that if he sang to the accompaniment of musical instruments it could be more pleasing to his dear Lord, and he himself could soar to greater heights of ecstasy. He thought of learning the harmonium. He found a musician and engaged his services for a few weeks. He fed him, provided him with all amenities, and learnt to play on the harmonium within a month.

He gave two hundred dollars to the musician as remuneration. The tutor was surprised; for twenty or twenty-five classes of half-an-hour's duration each day, he had never expected such a large amount. This sort of lofty-minded generosity was a common affair in Dr. Kuppuswami's life.

Every evening Dr. Kuppuswami would sit with Narasimha Iyer and a few selected friends in his puja room and pour forth, in melodious tunes, the healing names of the Lord. Tears of divine love would rain down his cheeks. Even after the others had dispersed the doctor would sit alone in the room and take to the silent repetition of the mantra till late in the night. Thus he passed his time in serving the Lord's children from





Dr Kuppuswami in Malaysia

morning till night, and in repeating His name throughout a major part of the night, too, reducing the time spent in personal comforts and rest to the barest minimum.

He arranged for discourses on the Ramayana and Bhagavatam, and his house was a permanent abode for holy men, poor and helpless people. He had set apart a hall in the house and had decorated it and set up a stage. He would collect the neighbouring children and train them as actors. Many were the lives of holy saints that he thus staged through these child-actors. When he staged the drama of 'Saint Nandanar' in Malaya he made even European officials sing kirtans with him. He would himself often take part in these dramas. These inspired him a great deal and the high ideals of these saints were ever before his mental vision.

He attended all social and religious functions of the locality and the suburban towns too. Without the presence of the doctor there would be no joy. He pumped joy and power into them. He would play on the harmonium and make people laugh and laugh, by his jokes and comical songs.

If occasionally he missed getting invitations from any of his close friends, he used to straightaway go to the friend and say, "Have you forgotten me? Anyhow you are my friend and I am bound to attend the

birthday celebration of your child!" And, in all his majestic boldness, Dr. Kuppuswami would begin sankirtan. No sanction, no introduction, no formality did he need. Everyone who came in contact with him was infected with his spirit. Many mocked at him at first, but joined him later.

He used to arrange for feeding brahmins and the poor on a large scale. He performed the anniversary (sraddha) ceremonies of his ancestors, with great faith and devotion, and invited priests for these ceremonies from hundreds of miles away. He used to feed untouchables and apply sandal paste to their foreheads. All these acts of kindness helped the doctor in his future life to realise the truth of 'Sarvam khalvidam Brahman — All indeed is Brahman.'

With the aid of some books Dr. Kuppuswami started practising sirshasana (headstand) and a few other important yoga asanas. His enthusiasm was so infectious that Sri Narasimha Iyer also began practising asanas. At night the doctor called Narasimha Iyer to him just before going to bed and asked, "Oh, Narasimha Iyer! Do you know how to stand on your head? You help me first. Then I will help you." He got ready. He placed his head on the pillow and threw his legs up on the wall, saying: "Oh, catch hold of my legs, they are shivering. Press them against the wall. That is right." Then he resumed the normal pose, saying: "Now come on. You do it." Though Narasimha had a nodding acquaintance with this exercise, he was far from being perfect. "Don't worry; I will catch hold of your legs," the doctor reassured him.

Narasimha Iyer started doing pranayama, tratak and such other hatha yoga exercises. He started wearing all sorts of dirty and torn clothes and imagined that by simply denying himself the necessities of life he could realise immortal bliss. He would not do his hair; he had removed the golden ear-rings and bangles that he used to wear. In short, he disfigured himself. Whenever he got leisure he would shut himself in the pantry and go on with his pranayama or stand upside down (in imperfect sirshasana) by the wall. With all the dietetic conveniences at his disposal he was yet unable to withstand the great strain of these exercises. The exercises performed in a haphazard manner produced some bad effects upon his system, and began to tell upon his health. Besides, hidden innate tendencies and desires harassed his heart.

The doctor noticed this change in Narasimha Iyer. He would never hastily upset anyone's programme, however faulty it may be; but one morning, turning up unexpectedly in the pantry while Narasimha Iyer was doing his pranayama, he gave a mild discourse: "You ought not to

take these things seriously into your head now. These authors simply write whatever comes to their mind, regardless of the difficulties that individual aspirants will have to undergo while following their instructions. Their writings are always one-sided. They do not preach the combined method. They often ignore the fundamentals and deal elaborately with advanced spiritual practices. They do not point out that it would be unwise to practise their precepts except under the direct guidance of an expert; for that hampers the sale of their books. These hatha yoga practices require an expert teacher. Take to the name of the Lord. Here you need no one to assist you. Give up these; just keep so much of these practices as are necessary for the maintenance of good health." Narasimha Iyer was impressed; and he obeyed.

But the eagerness of Narasimha Iyer to pursue the spiritual path continued unabated. One day he expressed to the doctor his desire to abandon worldly life and rush to the Himalayas in search of some yogi at whose feet he could practise yoga for the realisation of God. Dr. Kuppuswami gave a hearty laugh at this suggestion. "Wait; do not all of a sudden give up family life. You ought to fulfil marital obligations once you have undertaken them. Otherwise you will get difficulties which will retard your spiritual endeavours. There is yet time. God will guide you aright. Let this desire to renounce be always with you; and He will decide when you ought to be relieved of your worldly ties. Then you will surely get, by His grace, the help of a yogi in the Himalayas to guide you onward."

(Later, Narasimha Iyer rejoined his master — not as a servant, but as a disciple. As he met the monk Sivananda on the bank of the Ganges twenty-four years after he had left him in Malaya, his only feeling was one of amazement: "How true were your words, master. You could foresee and foretell the future with cent per cent precision!")

Very few swamis were seen in a far-off town in Malaya. However one called on the doctor one fine morning, on his way to Singapore. He had learned much about the doctor during his travels in Malaya, and had just dropped in to see him. The doctor was beside himself with joy at the very sight of a swami. Self-forgetfully he ran about entertaining him. He washed his feet with his own hands, made him sit comfortably on a sofa and started fanning him, at the same time asking Narasimha Iyer to give him a glass of warm milk. The swami was extremely pleased at this hospitality. The doctor insisted on his staying with him for an indefinite period.

Stopping for a few days with the doctor, the swami fell ill. So care-

fully and tenderly did the doctor nurse him back to health that he became captivated by the loving treatment. He had with him certain very valuable books which he cherished zealously. He had been keeping them concealed and at first refused to part with them. Now he voluntarily gave Kuppuswami the book Jiva-Brahma-Aikya-Vedanta-Rahasyam by Swami Kadappai Satchidananda Yogeswarar. It acted as a spark to further ignite his spirituality and set his thoughts God-wards. It led him to the study of other books - the works of Swami Ram Tirtha, Swami Vivekananda and Theosophical literature, etc. The swami stayed for a few days and said that further stay was not possible on account of important engagements he had in Singapore. With a heavy heart the doctor reluctantly went to the station and bought a first class seat to Singapore for the swami. He then returned home, fed him sumptuously and, giving him some good South Indian preparations to be taken en route, took him to the station and saw him off with tears in his eyes and with an insistent request that the swami should write to him when he proposed to return to Johore. The swami himself was visibly moved at the parting, such was the pure, unselfish and divine love that he had seen in the doctor. He gave the promise asked for and was soon able to redeem it.

Doctor Kuppuswami encountered other types of 'holy men' too. During the course of a talk he once told his disciples:

In Malaya there were several tantriks. (Tantrik, in the popular mind, is one who possesses magical powers — who uses special formulae called mantras and geometrical designs called yantras). It was the time the Spanish flu took a heavy toll of life in Malaya. I too, had an attack, but somehow escaped. One tantrik had several mantras and yantras. That was a wonderful art. A special unguent was applied on the thumb-nail of the adept of the mantra. Through this unguent Lord Hanuman himself would appear there and answer any question. The tantrik could tell what was going on in such and such a place, or what a particular person was doing, where he was and so on. I even now remember the mantra.

I had great reverence for the man who taught me the mantra. I used to prostrate before him nicely and serve him whenever the occasion arose. Later I gave up the tantrik practice as I did not like the idea of subjugating devatas and getting things done through them. "Gods should be worshipped and adored, not made to serve us," I said, and sent the yogi away with a small purse.

RENUNCIATION

Dr. Kuppuswami's renunciation of the worldly life is shrouded in mystery. He himself was reticent, and there were only two first-hand accounts, both of which concern what he did after he returned to India. The following 'reflections' are based on Sri Narasimha Iyer's revelations.

The doctor mused: "True, there are good chances of performing charity with the money at my disposal. But, after all, the service that I can thus render unto humanity can at best be only physical service. I have heard it said that the only real service is spiritual service, by which I can help humanity to get rid of suffering once and for all. But I must first equip myself with the spiritual wealth if I am to distribute it to others.

"I must renounce. Yes, YES, Y-E-S. I hear You prompting me from the innermost core of my heart that I must renounce. It is long past midnight; and there is no trace of sleep. I shall pack up my things tomorrow and leave in search of my immortal abode. I must realise God now."

About his mental condition at that time, he wrote:

'Is there not a higher mission in life than the daily round of official duties, eating and drinking? Is there not any higher form of eternal happiness than these transitory and illusory pleasures? How uncertain is life here. How insecure is existence on this earthplane — with various kinds of diseases, anxieties, worries, fears and disappointments. The world of names and forms is constantly changing. Time is fleeting. All hopes of happiness in this world terminate in pain, despair and sorrow.'

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Such were the thoughts that were constantly arising in my mind. The doctor's profession gave me ample evidence of the sufferings of this world. For a man of discrimination and dispassion, who has a sympathetic heart, the world is full of pain. True and lasting happiness cannot be had merely in gathering wealth. With the purification of the heart through selfless service, I had a new vision. I was deeply convinced that there must be a place — a sweet home of pristine glory and purity and divine splendour — where absolute security, perfect peace and lasting happiness can be had through Self-realisation. I frequently remembered the scriptural declaration: 'The day on which one gets dispassion, that very day one should renounce the world,' and also, 'For hearing the Truth, one should take sannyas.'

The words of scriptures have great value. In 1923 I gave up the life of ease, comfort and luxury, and reached India in search of an ideal centre for purposes of prayer, contemplation, study and a higher form of service to the world.

I took to the life of a mendicant, a true seeker after truth. I left my belongings in Malaya with a friend. A school-master in Malaya who came to the ashram in 1939 told me, "Mr. S. is still keeping all your articles intact, awaiting your return."

The following account of his renunciation comes from an old man whom Narasimha Iyer met in South India early in 1924:

Doctor Kuppuswami returned to India some months ago. He went straight to his native place. From the railway station he engaged a few carts to carry the things that he had brought with him and took them home. He was standing outside as the servants and the people of the household were busy unloading the things and taking them inside. All of a sudden, most mysteriously he was missing. We all thought that he might have gone to greet some of his old friends. But when nobody was looking he had slipped away to the railway station to catch the waiting train for his journey onwards. We waited and waited... and waited. When he did not turn up for a long time we went out in search of him. We could not find him anywhere. Yet, we waited; days and weeks fled by, but we could not get any trace of him. We were greatly worried; we searched for him everywhere, but without any sign of finding him.

Dr. Kuppuswami left Madras by train, with Benares as his destination.

Neither talk, amusements nor sights interested him on the way. The din and bustle, the hue and cry that the incoming and the outgoing passengers raised, fell on deaf ears and could not disturb him nor let a wave rise on the calm lake of his mind. He hardly stirred out of his seat, but was ever contemplating the object of his quest.

By stages Dr. Kuppuswami reached Benares. He knew not a word of Hindi, and most of the people there — especially those that mattered to him, viz., the caterers, the priests who direct pilgrims about and sadhus (holy men) — knew not a word of any other language. His supreme indifference during his life in Malaya stood him in good stead here. He seldom noticed what the shop-keeper put into his hands; he ate it and paid for it.

The doctor was a stranger to the North Indian habits and customs. He once took a mud-cup of milk from a shop. He thought that the mud-cup meant the same for a North Indian milkman as the brass ones meant for a South Indian; and he quietly washed the mud-cup and handed it back to the vendor. With a look of disgust on his face, the shop-keeper howled: "Throw it away." Though puzzled, he did as he was directed, and left the place, telling himself that there was a lot that he had to learn in order to live in these parts.

In Benares he visited the famous temple of Lord Vishwanath and thus realised one of the ambitions of his life. He prayed and stood still for quite a while, communing with his Beloved. "I have come, my Lord, to be Yours. Take me and do whatever you like with me. To do is my business, not to wish for the fruits thereof; that is Yours. I shall be content to be wafted like a dry leaf in the gale of Thy will. I am Thine, all is Thine, Thy will be done, my Lord."

Tears trickled down his cheeks all the time and he was in a high state of ecstasy. In a letter to Maharishi Shuddhananda Bharatiar, he wrote:

"The darshan of Lord Vishwanath gave me a new light, a new life. The memories of the past life disintegrated. I felt that Lord Vishwanath Himself was my guru."

What he wanted to do in order to achieve his aim of God-realisation he revealed during the course of a talk: "I wanted to sit under a tree and sing the Lord's name and do japa and meditate on Him, living on alms and chance morsels of food that passers-by might give me. I had not the least idea of starting an institution or conducting an ashram."

When he left Madras, renouncing the world, he did not take with

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him more than an extra dhoti and shirt in a small handbag. And at Benares he gave away all the money he had in charity — where was the need for money when the destination had been reached? He had almost thought that Benares was in the Himalayas. Now he found out that it was not so and that the Ganges that he took his bath in had its origin hundreds of miles further north.

He wanted seclusion; but he found Benares (a pilgrim centre) almost a modern city. It was winter, the cold was killing. He had not anticipated it, for he had no idea of it; but his mind was soaring far above the earth, helping the body to ignore the cold and neglect the hunger. The first phase of his tapas (austerity) had commenced. But, to Kuppuswami, reaching the goal was of far greater importance than bothering about the body. A 'Good Samaritan' had observed this wonderful man shivering with cold but so indifferent to it that he would not ask anyone for a blanket. He gave it. That blanket was the first charity Kuppuswami received.

This Good Samaritan found out from Dr. Kuppuswami his 'destination' and advised him to go to Pandharpur, and also provided him with a ticket for Poona.

On arrival at Poona he gave away what little he had in charity—then he took to the life of a wandering monk. With no possessions with him, alone in the world but with God as his sole and constant companion, he began his pilgrimage on foot. Where to go was not a problem to be worried over. Naturally, wherever his Beloved, who was in his heart, directed his feet.

Bare-headed and bare-footed, scantily clothed, he wandered beneath the burning skies of Maharastra. At times overtaken by nightfall while trudging along strange roads, he slept on the bare earth at the foot of some roadside tree. Not infrequently he had no food, and there were days when, forced by hunger, he would pick up wild figs and cherries scattered along the way-side and eat them after carefully wiping away the dust and the dirt. The two pieces of cloth were reduced to rags, but he did not care.

The stern rigours of this hard life only fanned the blaze of dispassion that was burning in his heart. Attracted by the bright and striking countenance of this strange youthful pilgrim and noticing the rags that covered his splendid physique, the kind inhabitants of a village raised a collection among themselves and bought him a pair of new dhotis. Scantily protected, he calmly endured the severe chill that set in with the coming of winter. At yet another period he was caught up in heavy rain

that drenched him to the skin. Having thus walked on for miles in the rain, he was forced by darkness to stop for the night in a tiny village. Finding no shelter he had to spend the night on a heap of straw, shivering in his wet clothes.

(Any young seeker will have to go through similar and various other ordeals sooner or later. He will have to face the trials with the same uniform fortitude the doctor displayed during all these hardships. The spiritual path demands rigorous austerity and heroic endurance at one time or the other. This has been the common experience of all such earnest souls who, fired by the ideal of Self-realisation, turned their backs upon the world of vanity and folly. The link between man and God is forged in the furnace of trial and adversity.)

Kuppuswami wandered here and there, in a strange land, amongst strangers who did not understand his language nor the ways of the educated and robust young man. He thus visited village after village. Born in a brahmin family, he did not know how to beg for alms. It was a strange experience for him. He would go to a house in a village, quietly approach a man and whisper into his ear: "I am a Madrasi brahmin. I am hungry. Can you give me some food?" He would neither question nor grumble. He would humbly take what was given, silently bless the giver, and then walk away. All whom he thus approached were astonished that he, whose very face indicated affluence, should hold up his palms for alms. They could not believe their eyes and ears. Some at once greeted him with great love, ushered him into their house and fed him nicely with good dishes.

After he had his food the radiant sadhu would bow low to his hosts, bless them and send up a prayer to the Almighty to bless them too. Very often he was requested by some pious family to make their house his temporary abode, but he would not stay anywhere for a second meal. He would quietly slip out and walk to the next village. He used to feel that he should otherwise prove to be a burden upon these good people, which was unthinkable to him.

By and by he came to a village called Dhalaj on the banks of the Chandra Bhaga. He had the local postmaster as his host on the first day. The postmaster was a pious widower, of noble character and a religious bent of mind. He insisted almost to the point of compulsion that Kuppuswami should stay with him. He agreed, but on the condition that he should be allowed to serve the postmaster in any manner he liked. The postmaster did not see any alternative.

Kuppuswami at once fell to the task. He would draw water and hew

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wood, and tending the cows was a delight to him. As soon as the cows arrived from the fields he would greet them and give them fodder with his own hands. Kuppuswami made himself the domestic servant of the postmaster, who got less than the salary he had paid his own cook in Malaya. The postmaster was in a difficult position. To decline the service would mean losing him; and his conscience did not allow him to let the situation continue. But seeing that Kuppuswami did all the work in an astoundingly cheerful manner, he kept quiet. Then, after some time Kuppuswami moved on. His sole desire was to retire to some little-known corner, some sacred spot where he would be able to lose himself in the contemplation of the divine. After traversing the vast sweltering plains of the Deccan and lower Hindustan, he arrived at the foot of the Himalayas. A ticket procured for him by a kind soul, Sri Dastar (then postmaster at Dixal), brought him to sacred Hardwar.

From Hardwar he walked towards Rishikesh, and on the way as he was resting by the roadside a tonga (horse-cart) came clattering down the rough jungle road. As it passed the spot where he was seated, the pilgrim passenger in the tonga flung a coin as an offering. The young ascetic, who was then in a mood of intense dispassion and spiritual aspiration, desired to have nothing to do with the world and its gifts and so walked away from the place without so much as a glance at the coin. This was the attitude of mind with which this life commenced.

Sannyas

On the 8th May, 1924, Kuppuswami reached Rishikesh, an obscure spot by the Ganges, a place quite unknown to any in the outside world, save the few who hungered for God-realisation. His joy knew no bounds. The perennial Ganges and the majestic hills clad in green forests greeted him.

On the night of his arrival at Rishikesh he slept on the verandah of Charan Das Dharamsala, a public rest-house. His daily routine consisted of a bath in the Ganges, prayer in the mornings and meditation and intense tapas (austerities) throughout the rest of the day. Thus he subjected himself to sadhana. On the 1st June 1924 as he was taking bath in the Ganges there came His Holiness Swami Viswananda Saraswati, belonging to the Sringeri Math of Sri Sankaracharya. The doctor and the monk were attracted to each other. The doctor saw a guru in the monk and the monk saw a chela (disciple) in the doctor. Swami Viswanandaji took Dr. Kuppuswami to his kutir. After resting a while, the doctor went to Kalikamliwala Choultry (an alms-house for sannyasins) for alms,

which were refused him as he was not a sannyasi. As he retraced his steps Swami Viswanandaji again met him. After exchanging a few words, Dr. Kuppuswami was initiated into the sannyasa order by His Holiness Swami Viswanandaji. (The religious rite of viraja homa was done by Sri Swami Vishnudevanandaji Maharaj at Kailas Ashram.) He cast off his secular dhoti and put on the gerua cloth presented by the guru. He was taught the secrets of kaivalya (liberation) and the mysteries of the mahavakyas (great sentences). Doctor Kuppuswami became Swami Sivananda Saraswati of the Sankaracharya order.

Asked whether he would follow Swami Viswananda to Hardwar and Benares, Swami Sivananda decided to stay, and plunged himself in sadhana. The guru wrote to him giving instructions about sannyasa. Further light comes from Swamiji's own autobiography:

In search of a guru I reached Rishikesh and prayed to the Lord for His grace. There are many egoistic students who say: "I need no guru. God is my guru." They change their own robes and live independently. When difficulties and troubles confront them, they are bewildered. I do not like the rules and regulations of the scriptures, sages and saints to be violated. When there is a change of heart there should be a change in the external form also. The glory and the liberty of a sannyasi can hardly be imagined by the timid and the weak.

A personal guru is necessary in the beginning. He alone can show you the path to attain God, the Guru of gurus, and obviate the snares and pitfalls on your path. Self-realisation is a transcendental experience. You can march in the spiritual path only by placing implicit faith in the words of sages who have realised the Truth and attained knowledge of the Self.

Explaining the glory of the ochre-coloured robe he said:

Wearing the ochre-coloured cloth (the orange robe) is very necessary for one who has a changed mind. Due to the force of habit, when the senses move among sense-objects, the moment you look at the coloured cloth that you wear it will remind you that you are a sannyasin. It will give you a kick and save you from vicious actions. It has got its own glory and advantages. Only a real sannyasin can cut off all connections and ties and completely get rid of attachment. His friends and relatives will not trouble him.

The robe is of great service when one appears on the platform for preaching. It has got its own sanctity in the minds of Hindus. Common people will easily receive the ideas from a sannyasin. Some hypocrites say: 'We have given colouring to our minds. We need not change the clothes.' I do not believe these men. Even the famous Mandana Misra, avatara of Brahma who fought with Sri Sankara, became a sannyasin. The great rishi Yajnavalkya became a sannyasin. Only those who have cravings, passions and attachments and who are timid, dread to change the cloth, and thus bring forth false, ingenious, unsound arguments.

Why he chose to settle in Rishikesh is told in Swamiji's own words:

Rishikesh is a holy place with many holy men. There are almshouses to provide free food for all monks, yogis and aspirants. They can stay in any of the kutirs (single-room cottages) or have their own thatched cottages and huts in any place. Near about Rishikesh there are many charming places like Brahmapuri, Nilakantha, Vasistha Guha and Tapovanam. Monks who stay in such places get their dry rations once in fifteen days and prepare their own food.

The scenery of the Himalayas is charming and soul-elevating. The holy Ganges is a blessing. One can spend hours in contemplation, sitting on a rock or on a sand-bank on the side of the Ganges. There are some libraries from where one can get authoritative works on yoga and philosophy in Sanskrit, English and Hindi. Some learned men conduct regular classes and give private tuition to deserving students. The climate is pleasant — slightly cold in winter and slightly hot in summer. There are allopathic and ayurvedic hospitals to attend to the sick. Thus I found Rishikesh an ideal place for intense and undisturbed spiritual practice for all seekers after Truth.

Swami Sivananda was in search of shelter from the pouring rain. To sit and sing the names of the Lord he wanted a roof over his head, but he was eager that such a dwelling should be far away from crowds or even pilgrims. Kolghat in Rishikesh offered him the best choice. It was far from the market and the small township of Rishikesh. He had found out the timings for bhiksha (alms). He decided that he would present himself at the alms-houses at the appropriate time for his meagre fare and would

spend the rest of the day in silent and intense contemplation of the Lord. The place was about two miles from these alms-houses. In sun and rain he would walk the distance to get four pieces of bread and a cup of dhal (soup). He had entirely forgotten at that time that he was not accustomed to such austere diet, nor to the added austerity of having to walk a couple of miles for it every day.



The Ganges at Rishikesh

How he managed to acclimatise and to adjust himself to such conditions of living is an interesting story. Sometimes while proceeding to the kshetra (alms-house) he would be told that some rich merchant was giving cooked food as alms to mendicants. It would be only a couple of roti (unleavened bread) and dhal, yet, to the hungry ascetic, that would be good enough. "The purpose is served," he would think, and return to his river-side abode to appease the hunger of his soul. The body accustomed to rich delicacies may not all at once be able to adapt itself to insipid, poor and ill-cooked roti and dhal. Recognising the needs of some swamis, the Punjab Sindh Kshetra used to give them some chillies and salt. For a few days Swamiji would visit this counter and receive this 'extraordinary luxury', but, soon he found out that it was unnecessary for him. The fire of extreme dispassion that burned in his heart had burned all sense-cravings in him so that he had no difficulty in forgetting and foregoing what could be considered as necessities.

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Similar was the case of the sweet rotis that would be occasionally served to swamis near the Chandrabhaga riverside. In the beginning Swamiji would permit himself this delicacy, but soon he found that it was not worth walking four miles for, and that the sweetness of meditation and repetition of the Lord's name was all that his purified mind hankered after.

Time was so precious for him that a moment spent idly or in useless pursuits was torture. The Kalikamliwala Kshetra, where he took his alms, used to give swamis two tickets per month for getting a free shave, but Swamiji felt that waiting for the barber was a waste of time — and so grew a beard.

Last, but not least, was a special 'chana-ki-dhal' (soup with Bengal gram), which the founder of the Nepali Kshetra, the great Nepali Baba, himself served to the swamis. Very often Swamiji would walk all the distance from Kolghat to Nepali Kshetra, a distance of about three miles, for this dhal. He often referred to this during his visits to the Nepali Kshetra later on. Talking to Mahant Chetramji, a noble saint and disciple of the Nepali Baba, Swamiji would say: "I still remember the days when I would come all the way from Kolghat to take the cup of 'chana-ki-dhal'. Babaji would give it so lovingly to me. He had great affection for me." It was not the dhal (though Swamiji also used to say it was tasty), but the opportunity of having the darshan of Nepali Baba that was the power that drew Swamiji to the Nepali Kshetra.

From Kolghat Swamiji moved to the Brahmananda Ashram, nearer the present ashram. Two dilapidated rooms on the ground floor of this ashram were vacant, so Swamiji occupied one of them. Brahmananda Ashram was to the north of the alms-houses as Kolghat was to the south, but Brahmananda Ashram offered Swamiji what his heart longed for — an inspiring and constant view of the Ganges and the Himalayas.

The call of the Oversoul was often so insistent during this period of Swamiji's life that he felt the absolute need of total seclusion. (Of course he was even then ready to attend to urgent calls from the sick.)

This inner demand led him to a solitary kutir on the bank of the Ganges between Lakshmanjhula and Swarg Ashram. It was not even quite a kutir — just a heap of stones, two walls, another heap of stones (which was almost a wall in those days), and without a roof except for the green foliage of an overhanging tree. Insects and reptiles used to reside in this kutir; it was their natural abode. This was also Swamiji's abode for a considerable time. This satisfied him, for a few minutes walk would take him to the interior of the Himalayan forests for deep and undisturbed

meditation. No one disturbed him, because no one dared to venture into that region even during daytime. He would take food only once in a while from the Swarg Ashram. Now that he had his fill of Self-bliss he was not eager to go for his daily alms.

This austere life was not one of dry self-centredness. It did not spring from any scorn of the world and humanity. On the contrary, its aim was to see the world as the body of God, and humanity as the children of the Lord. He was vigilant, therefore, that this tapas (austerity) should not turn into a selfish endeavour. Service was part and parcel of tapas, and of an extraordinary type. It was utterly selfless, intense, dynamic and austere, involving a great deal of personal discomfort and sacrifice.

Swami Kalikanandaji, a renowned mahatma, did not fail to notice that serving the sick was a fundamental trait in Swamiji. He thought that the opportunity was not to be lost, so one day he approached Swamiji with the proposal to run a charitable dispensary. The offer was gladly accepted, and a modest establishment was opened under the apt name, 'Satya Sevashram Dispensary' (satya — truth; seva — service). About this Swamiji said: "Service of the sick, the poor and the holy men purifies the heart; this is a field for developing all the divine qualities such as compassion, sympathy, mercy and generosity. That helps to destroy the evil qualities and impurities of the mind such as egoism, selfishness, pride, hatred, anger, lust, jealousy etc. Holy men and the poor villagers who were sick did not have proper medical aid. Therefore I started a small dispensary, 'Satya Sevashram', at Lakshmanjhula, on the way to Badri-Kedar (two famous Himalayan shrines and pilgrim centres)." Swamiji served the devotees with great love and devotion. The road to Badri was bad, the journey difficult and attended by several risks. He used to keep in packets the simple common drugs that Badri-pilgrims needed for use during the pilgrimage. He would give the packets to the pilgrim with the request that he might use the drugs when necessary and serve other pilgrims whenever opportunities presented themselves.

He arranged special diet for the serious cases and provided milk and other requirements.

(In 1934 before leaving Swargashram and finally settling down at Muni-ki-Reti across the Ganges, Swamiji handed over the management of the dispensary to a Swami Jnanananda. He too was a doctor by profession prior to his sannyasa.)

One of Swamiji's contemporaries, Sadhu Prajnatha — a renowned vedantin and a highly detached mahatma — lived in Uttarkashi in the heart of the Himalayas. (Incidentally he is also the author of a book

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entitled Nada Yoga). He would visit Rishikesh for some months every year, and live in a humble hut in a forest colony of sadhus, locally known as Purana Jhadi. Swamiji had noticed that medical facilities were absolutely lacking in Purana Jhadi, and was therefore quick to entreat and persuade the venerable sadhu to look after the health and well-being of other mahatmas residing there. Swamiji did not rest content until Prajnathaji was busy going from cottage to cottage, enquiring about the health of fellow-monks and bringing medicines to those who were in need. Now and then he would come to Swamiji to inform him about the case-histories of the patients as well as to get the required medicines. Sometimes there would be a few critical cases on which Swamiji would be urged to attend personally.

On one occasion a pilgrim to Badri came to see him one evening. When he was taking leave Swamiji gave him the usual packet with the direction for using the medicines. The pilgrim left for Lakshmanjhula, the next halt. After the visitor had left it occurred to Swamiji that he should have given a certain special medicine that would be particularly helpful to the pilgrim. The thought that he had not done the utmost that he could have done, filled his mind. So very early the next morning, even before dawn, he took the medicine and started at a steady uphill pace to catch up with the traveller. When he reached the next halt he found that the pilgrim was an even earlier riser than he and had already proceeded on his way. Undaunted, Swamiji at once commenced running higher up to Garud Chetty, only to be informed that the object of his quest had moved further on. Undismayed, he pressed on to Phul Chetty, and not finding him even there, ran further, caught up with him after another four miles, and there gave him the precious medicine. By this time it was past nine o'clock and Swamiji had to race back to his kutir to be in time for his daily alms.

When a junior monk, Swami Atmananda, lay dangerously ill at Rishikesh, Swamiji left Swarg Ashram at once and went to Rishikesh, where he stayed for nearly three weeks nursing him successfully through a critical period. The grateful monk wrote: "He whom I have the honour to call Gurudev stayed with me during my severe illness, in some neighbouring dharamsala at Rishikesh, for about twenty days to personally attend on me. He saved me when my life was in danger during that illness."

The Maharani of Singai, a very pious lady, had great reverence for Swamiji and used to visit Lakshmanjhula often to have his darshan. She owned a fine building just near the Swarg Ashram temple. Whenever she came she used to remain there for at least a month or two. During such days she would send fruits and sweets daily to Swamiji. Swamiji in his turn distributed them to others. He was doing rigorous spiritual sadhana and had no use for luxuries like fruits. By and by he tried to keep himself aloof and wanted to avoid close movements with the royal disciple. Even then the Maharani would not stop sending fruits and milk to him.

One day she arranged for a feast. She personally went and invited all the sadhus, and she very anxiously expected Swamiji to dine with her. But Swamiji realised that he should overcome all temptations. He was very determined and, calling one of his two disciples, he asked him to lock up the kutir doors from outside and go away. The disciple was perplexed. Swamiji sternly commanded him, "Look here. Lock me up here in the kutir for two or three days. Do it!" The young student carried out his guru's orders.

Though disappointed, she was yet obstinate and she sent the various dishes through a servant, with instructions to wait at the kutir door and give them to Swamiji. The servant found the door locked, and awaiting Swamiji's arrival (he thought that Swamiji might have gone out) sat outside the kutir. He sat and sat, till his hips ached. He then went to Swamiji's disciples and enquired. They advised him to return to his mistress.

Swamiji did not stir out of the kutir. No one knew that he was locked up there. He had an earthen vase which he used as a bed-pan. When it became night he gently opened the kutir window and emptied the pan. Without water or food he was meditating during those three days. On the fourth day, as per his instructions, the disciple opened the door. Swamiji took a long breath on being told that she had left the place the previous evening.

SWARG ASHRAM

A Glimpse of Real Sadhana

The first few years of Swamiji's austerity were spent in a totally homeless state. 'Here today, there tomorrow, and the day after will look after itself' was his attitude. He stayed in the Nilakant Hills and wrote his commentary on the *Kathopanishad* during this period. Later, with a view to devoting more time to prayer and meditation, he moved to Swarg Ashram. There he lived in a small kutir, eight feet by ten feet, with a small verandah in front, and depended on the Kalikamliwala Kshetra for food.

Very soon after arriving at Kutir Ill Swamiji became so famous that the authorities of Swarg Ashram used to direct pilgrims and other visitors to him for darshan. "He is the only great mahatma and yogi in Swarg Ashram," they would say.

Swamiji had no time for curiosity-mongers; he would go to any extent to avoid wasting time. It is said that sometimes he would run away to the jungle or hide himself underneath huge boulders on the bank of the Ganges, in order to enjoy an undisturbed period of meditation.

In his autobiography, Swamiji gives the following description of his life in Swarg Ashram:

I did not spend much time in cleaning the teeth, washing clothes and bathing. I quickly finished these and then I was a bit free for my sadhana, study and service. I never depended on disciples or anyone who was awaiting opportunities to serve me. I had fixed times for all items of work such as study, writing notes and letters

to spiritual aspirants, exercises, going out for food, etc. Gradually people came to me in large numbers. That seriously affected my systematic work. With the permission of the authorities of the ashram I fixed up a barbed-wire fence around my kutir and locked the gate.

Before the visitors I did not show my erudition by discussing high philosophy at length. I gave short hints on practical sadhana and disposed of them in five minutes. I kept a signboard at the entrance of my compound: 'Interview — between 4 and 5 p.m. — for five minutes at a time only.'

During winter the devotees were not many. I utilised this time for a brisk walk in the compound, singing bhajans and songs. For some days I would not come out of my room, eating only the remnants of dry bread I had kept from my daily alms. Thus intense sadhana was my goal. My joy was indescribable when I spent hours in the evenings on the sand-banks of the Ganges, or sitting on a fine rock gazing at wonderful Mother Nature. I became one with nature.

Of the Swarg Ashram days Sri Raj Giri, one of his early associates, says:

Swamiji was characterised by such extreme dispassion that he used to deny himself even the barest necessities of life. He did not spare himself even with regard to diet and covering. Rather than daily tolerate an interruption of his spiritual practices which the visit to the kshetra entailed, he preferred to keep the body on stale bread. He would keep bread with him for several days on end, and after drying it he would dip it in the Ganges water and eat it. It meant that sometimes he would subsist for one week on a ration of one day. Thus, day after day, using every moment of his precious time for meditation, japa and worship, he made unsalted, tasteless hard bread his main meal.

He had only two pieces of cloth that he wore on his person. His room was severely bare of any article, except for a solitary water pot and a blanket. There was a time when he gave away his only blanket to a poor pilgrim, and shivered in his thin cotton cloth until providence, in the shape of a kind visitor, supplied him with a new blanket.

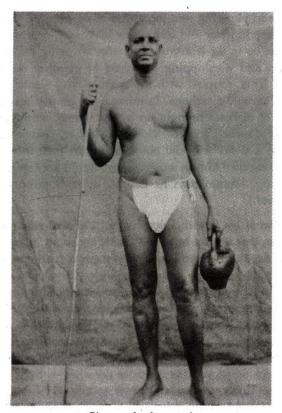
To do japa he used to be up very early in the closing watches of the

night, and plunging into the waters of the Ganges he would stand waist deep in water and commence his rosary, continuing until the sun rose up in the heavens. Only after invoking the deity through the sun and worshipping it, would he clamber out of the cold waters. This, coupled with the spartan fare, resulted in a severe type of chronic diarrhoea. Lumbago was another result, as well as a state of diabetes brought on by the intense strain of prolonged periods of mental concentration. (Yet in later years Swamiji would point to a seeker who did not wear a shirt even in winter, as one who far excelled him in austerity, and would not reveal that during his Swarg Ashram days he had put himself through far greater austerities.)

When one of his first diciples, Swami Paramananda, first entered Swamiji's kutir, this is what he saw: "Inside the room, in a corner, there was a heap of dry bread, many bundles of papers, dealwood boxes with a number of bottles, and a few trunks with locks. On a plate he offered me some biscuits and some almonds." The biscuits were Huntley and Palmer biscuits! Swami Paramananda himself could not make out the relation between the swami, the dry breads and the biscuits. The problem was solved for him, however, the next day. Swamiji took him to the kshetra for alms. Whereas the other monks carried a small piece of cloth and a small vessel — one for bread and the other for the dhal — Swamiji had three or four vessels. In these vessels he used to take milk and curd. After leaving his bread and dhal in his kutir, he would walk up to Lakshmanjhula with the vessels containing the milk and curd, and distribute them to ailing monks. The dry bread was for himself; biscuits and almonds for others. Thus did Swami Paramananda discover: "As his heart is filled with mercy he keeps several things in his kutir to serve the sick and poor. People who have not moved closely with him mistake him for a babu (luxury loving) sannyasin. In reality, he is a man of the greatest dispassion. If one watched Swamiji's evening meal one would understand his internal dispassionate nature. The morning dry bread is his evening meal, and the water of the Ganges his sauce."

Swamiji used to keep a small pocket notebook — The Whip — in which he would record what he wanted to remind himself of. He used to maintain it regularly. It gives a glimpse of the intense and integral austerities that he practised during the Swarg Ashram days:

More time (eight hours) should be spent in meditation and meditation alone, even 12, 16 hours daily.



Sivananda the ascetic

Even study and medical treatment should be given up for some time — pure meditation alone.

Winter must be well utilised. That is the best time for meditation. For a month or fifteen days leave Swarg Ashram without informing anybody. Take two clothes and one blanket. Roam about along the banks of the Ganges canal from Hardwar to Meerut. Live on begging from house to house. Do not talk with the villagers. Observe vow of silence on these days.

- 1. Serve bhangis (scavengers)
- 2. Serve rogues
- 3. Serve inferiors
- 4. Eat from Mohammedan's hands
- 5. Remove faecal matter.
- 6. Clean clothes of sadhus. Take delight
- 7. Carry water

There is nothing to be hated in this world. Hatred is ignorance. All contempt for anything or any being must be removed by love and vichar (enquiry).

- 1. Forget like a child an injury done by somebody immediately.
- 2. Never keep it in the heart. It kindles hatred.

Cultivate

- 1. Maitri (friendliness)
- 2. Karuna (compassion)
- 3. Daya (mercy)
- 4. Prem (divine love)
- 5. Kshama (forgiveness)
- 1. Do not revenge
- 2. Resist not evil
- 3. Return good for evil
- 4. Bear insult and injury
- 1. Akrodha (angerless) state
- 2. Nirvaira (hateless) state

Develop good manners, extreme politeness, courtesy, etiquette, good demeanour, nobility, gentleness, mildness. Never be rude, harsh or cruel.

Namaskara Sadhana

Give salutation and prostration first to everybody.

- 1. Give up salt
- 2. Give up sugar
- 3. Give up spices
- 4. Give up vegetables
- 5. Give up chillies
- 6. Give up tamarind

Unless you practise all these things, you cannot become a real sadhu.

Of 'The Whip' a senior disciple, Swami Chidananda, later wrote:

That he sought to build up the genuine article — the stern spirit of true sadhuism — can be glimpsed in The Whip. One portion reveals how, when he detected that attachment might creep in by his visiting the same alms-house daily for his bhiksha, he forthwith made it a rule of going to two or three places in turn, getting a couple of rotis at each place. It further shows that he avoided taking his meals within the premises of the kshetras, but used to go out into the open.

One significant paragraph reads: "Sadhuism is a new birth. If big kshetras abuse you, bear it. Do not think of the past life and birth." Then another, "Walk without shoes as far as possible. Hardy life till death is necessary for a sadhu."

It is seen as a rule that when one leaves home and relatives by a formal renunciation he imagines that he has given up all attachment, but it is nothing of the sort. He has merely given up the object he was attached to, whereas the tendency to get attached has come with him and it is inside him all the while. So, after renunciation, during sadhana, it comes to the surface and shows its face in various ways. Swamiji hunted it out tirelessly in all the corners of his mind, analysing all his actions, searching his thoughts, and managed to root out the very trace of it from inside by these various means.

True expansion of the heart is very rare, and the quick and ready impulse to give does not come easily to anyone. The astonishing generosity and large-hearted magnanimity that Swamiji now manifests, he assiduously perfected while at Swarg Ashram. For a long time, whenever visiting pilgrims made him offerings of cash, fruits, eatables or other articles, he deliberately denied himself, took everything and gave it to the other mahatmas in the neighbourhood. So much did he stick to this practice, that we hear of how neighbouring sadhus took to directing all new pilgrims to Swamiji, knowing that all offerings to him would later indirectly flow into their hands without fail!

The advanced practice of intense meditation seems to be the real power that blossomed into the unruffled equanimity and the strange dignity and self-confidence that he radiates. His quiet strength, coupled with the force of his utterance and glance that make themselves felt immediately, are doubtless the direct outcome of his inner sadhana and tapas.

Swamiji had the habit of physical exercise ingrained in him since childhood, and during his sadhana days he religiously maintained his routine of exercise — chief of which was running a mile or two in the open — and the practice of yoga asanas, pranayama, etc. Some orthodox sannyasins view exercise with keen disfavour and intolerance, but Swami never favoured fanaticism. He went to a less frequented part of Swarg Ashram away from the main settlement past the bend of the river, and sprinted vigorously a good mile.

It was at this stage (in the early thirties) that Swamiji remembered that a certain amount of his past savings could be recovered. He therefore petitioned the departments concerned, and with the help of Sri Ganga Saranji, a retired judge, a sum of about five thousand rupees was salvaged. The austere and disciplined mind of Swamiji at once prompted him to decide that even a single cent of this amount was not to be used for his personal needs. It was deposited in the Postal Savings Bank, and the monthly interest accruing therefrom was utilised for the purchase of medicines, besides printing a few bulletins on sadhana for free distribution.

The treatment of body and soul were equally important to him. With the first instalment of the interest money (about twenty rupees a month), Swamiji placed an order for some essential medicines from Calcutta. The dealwood boxes in which the drugs arrived became the first 'almirah' of the Sivananda Charitable Hospital, carefully partitioned with pasteboard sheets, inside which were juxtaposed the bottles of diaphoretic, carminative, bromide and other mixtures. Thus the problem of getting medicines was solved to a large extent. But mere medicines are not enough to cure diseases, and the almshouses did not provide anything other than a few coarse chapatis and lentil soup (dhal), whether a monk was sick or healthy. So Swamiji had to divide his monthly interest money for purchasing medicines as well as some milk, curd, sago and barley. This was the equipment for his daily pilgrimage to the huts of sick mahatmas. He was now confident with strength-giving barley drink for the fever patient, hot steaming milk for the convalescent and demulcent curd for those whose intestines were ravaged by dysentry and diarrhoea. Though the amount was hardly sufficient to make both ends meet, a considerable headway had been made in the domain of Swamiji's modest mission. His joy knew no bounds.

The wife of a rich landlord used to refer to Swamiji as "That swami who used to walk about in Swarg Ashram, visiting kutir after kutir with a number of cups in his hands and a dirty piece of cloth over his head."

In the hot sun he would thus wander about, and would only then return to his own kutir and take his meal. Dry bread and dhal which had become as cold as Ganges water was his feast. If by chance he came across a stray beggar or any hungry man on the way, most of his own meagre ration would be quickly transferred to him. The kshetra authorities learnt about this later and started increasing Swamiji's ration, to accommodate his charity.

Mere food and medicine are not enough, again, hence they would always be offered with a word of cheer, of encouragement and a splash of delightful humour. Without a word Swamiji would take aside the sick man's soiled clothes, and they would be back in their place in a few hours, washed and neatly folded. He would not leave the water pot unfilled, nor the floor unswept.

When an opportunity for service presented itself, Swamiji grasped it; he allowed no consideration to make him hesitate or procrastinate.

In about 1926, a young anchorite who belonged to a highly-placed family of the Southern Provinces, almost a prince in a small way, was practising austerities at Swarg Ashram. So complete was his renunciation, so severe the standard of self-denial and so extremely sensitive his disposition, that he not only never accepted any sort of gift from anyone, but also scrupulously avoided even borrowing anything. He persistently declined Swamiji's offers of little things of simple everyday necessity and would not even allow any of his attempts at small services.

Gradually Swamiji's absolute selflessness and the genuine desire to help so overcame him that he ended by accepting whatever Swamiji brought to him. The onslaught of this disinterested love made Bhaskarananda (for that was the name of the young ascetic) relax the stern austerity for which his name had become a byword amongst the hermit community of the place.

During the early days of his life at Swarg Ashram Swamiji had earned a reputation for daring to venture into regions which those who had any love of life would not even have glimpsed. Once Swami Anantanandaji suffered from a virulent type of cholera. People feared to approach anywhere near his kutir, but not Swamiji: he was in constant attendance at Anantanandaji's bedside. With his own hands he would clean the bed-pan and wash the excreta from the patient's body. When Sri Veeraraghavachari's disciple suffered similarly, it was Swamiji who volunteered to attend to him.

A severe attack of smallpox was reported at Kailash Ashram and Swamiji was sent for. Immediately he went to the bedside of the patient.

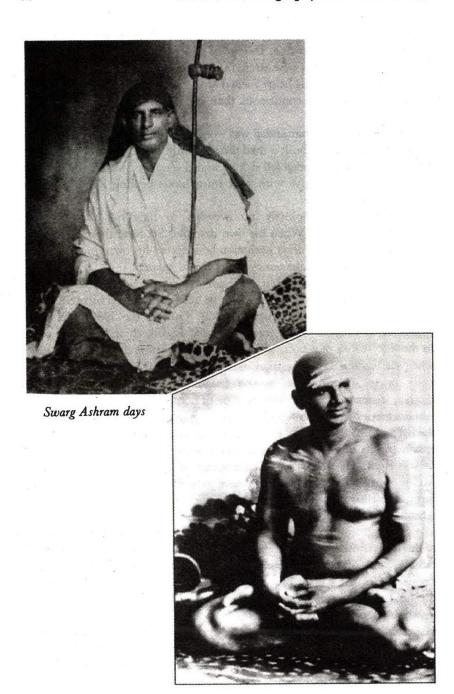
He stayed there the whole day and throughout the period of his illness, rendering him every service. Instead of getting infected with the disease Swamiji felt that he got new strength and power from the very source of power and strength. His heart melted at the suffering, and remembrance of God became more continuous than otherwise would have been experienced.

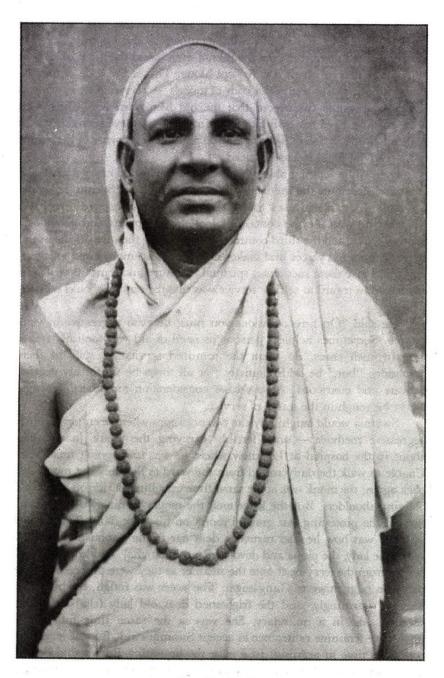
Sri Swami Kalyananandaji was wonderstruck at this service and, as a mark of admiration, built a shed near Swamiji's kutir at Swarg Ashram. Whenever Kalyananandaji fell sick he would send for Swamiji and no one else. "Whatever you give with your miraculous healing hand will cure me," he would say.

Swamiji had absolutely no aversion to handling the offensive discharges of patients. When his own disciple, Sri Swami Atmanandaji, was ailing, without the least hesitation he inserted his own finger into the rectum of the patient and removed the faecal matter.

In Swamiji, fear of public criticism was conspicuous by its absence. "What is my duty?" was the question he constantly asked himself; never did he ask, "What will people think?" During the 1930's the aged Maharani of Singhai would frequently visit Rishikesh and Swamiji, clad in the fiery robes of a sannyasi, would hold an umbrella above her head when she walked along the road in the hot sun. His fellow-sannyasins, in their pride of sannyasa, would laugh at this monk serving the mother, instead of treating her as a mere householder and asking her to rub his feet. To him, however, it was an opportunity to serve, to worship the living Lord; he felt that not only was he justifying the ochre robe, but enhancing its dignity, by rendering such service! Time has revealed that he was right. He rose to be a mighty sage of Self-realisation; and those who succumbed to sannyas vanity have passed away, hugging the external form, the illusory appearance (maya) they mistook for Brahman, the Absolute Reality.

Swamiji would visit Lucknow during his tours and stay in the palace of the Maharani. The old woman was fond of smoking 'hukkah' (hubble bubble) and often her servants were lax in their duties. Without the knowledge of the Maharani, early in the morning Swamiji would place the hukkah ready at hand. She also had a liking for soda which she invariably took in the early morning. On occasions her servants may have neglected to give her the soda at the appointed time; but Swamiji, the honoured guest whom the Maharani had adopted as her guru, would anticipate his disciple's needs and would keep the soda ready and hand it to her at the appropriate moment.





Siva the Saivite

Swamiji was never tired of warning the sannyasins that they should beware of moving too closely with members of the opposite sex. He sternly warned them that they should not even spend the night in a room adjacent to that in which a lady slept alone. This is the code of morals. But to him there was a superior code of morals — service. Once, while at Lucknow, Swamiji discovered that the old Maharani was ailing with acute rhinitis. Even her own kith and kin would not have served her with such solicitude as Swamiji did. He used to sleep in a corner of her room, to be ready at hand in case of need.

Even while walking along the roads Swamiji would carry a medicine chest and distribute the medicine to the sick. H.H. Sri Swami Tapovanji Maharaj of Uttarkashi used to describe how Swamiji carried three bags wherever he went — one containing leaflets, pamphlets and notebooks, another fruits, and the third common drugs. Along the roadside he would stop at a hundred places and make enquiries about monks and villagers. He would give them medicine, spiritual literature and fruits as well. His catchword in regard to selfless service was that the service should seek the patient.

He said "On rare occasions you must be even aggressive in your service. Sometimes helpless persons in need of aid will foolishly refuse aid. In such cases, do them the required service in spite of their hesitation, "but," he added quietly, "at all times be uniformly decent, delicate and courteous. Always have consideration for others' feelings. Never be rough in the name of service."

Swamiji would laughingly cite two occasions when he employed such aggressive methods - once forcibly carrying the monk Inanananda about in the hospital at Lucknow where he was undergoing treatment. Unable to walk the daily round from the ward to the dressing room and back again, the monk was at the same time unwilling to ride on Swamiji's obliging shoulders. But the latter took the matter in his own hands and carried the protesting but grateful monk on his back daily. The second instance was how he had turned a deaf ear to the remonstrations of a venerable lady, the pious and devoted Rani of Singhai, and himself lifted her up from the ferry-boat onto the steamer as they were proceeding in a party on pilgrimage to Gangasagar. The water was rough, the boat was heaving alarmingly, and the frightened dear old lady (she was about seventy) was in a quandary. She was at the same time full of the instinctive feminine reluctance to accept Swamiji's aid. But the latter did not waste time in arguing. In a trice the protesting Rani found herself gently and reverently lifted up and safely deposited on board the steamer,

good-naturedly riled by her own daughters laughing merrily at Swamiji's effective tactics.

Not infrequently the situation was of a different nature. Hearing of his efficiency as a man of medicine and his loving nature, numerous people would invade his cell for help and treatment at all odd hours of the day. So much so that at times he felt forced to flee from the locality and hide himself either among the huge rocks by the water's edge or in some dilapidated kutir further inside the jungle. Thus he would snatch a quiet hour or two for deep meditation.

At times urgent summons would come from some distressed person; then leaving aside everything he would run (at times even at midnight), to relieve him. Once an amusing incident occurred which proved a trial to his patience. At midnight a sadhu invaded his kutir, even climbing the protective fencing surrounding it to hammer on the door insistently. He wanted Swamiji to remove some grit that had entered his eye! Though very tired, Swamiji maintained his equanimity, carefully attended to this night-raider and sent him back satisfied. Calls to treat scorpion-bites would come at all unexpected moments because these creatures abound in that region. Not once did he allow his temper to be ruffled even under the most annoying circumstances.

During the later period of his penance Swamiji brought into the service of the sick — in addition to his body, mind and heart — his soul force, too. He utilised his psychic powers to bring about a rapid healing. He was an adept in the transmission of pranashakti to the diseased parts of the patient, thus effecting almost a miracle-cure.

He would always insist that after administering the medicine he should be allowed to massage the legs of the patient. He had lost all distinctions of caste, creed, colour, social status or even of sex. A strange but significant incident took place during this period. Once a pilgrim (a lady from South India), was taken ill at the Kalikamliwala dharamsala. She went to Swamiji as she had been directed to do, explained her condition and got the medicine from him. Almost involuntarily, Swamiji made himself ready for the psychic massage. This young lady, modest, devout and shy, did not like the idea of a worshipful sannyasin touching her feet, so Swamiji gave up the idea. When he returned to his kutir this incident set his mind thinking; he called Sri Swami Atmanandaji, one of his senior disciples, to his side and said, "Why was it that I did not insist on my rendering her the usual service? She might have had a different idea altogether, but as a vedantin I should have convinced her of my viewpoint. The one Self dwells in all bodies. No, I should not have

neglected my duty."

This went on working in his mind, and early next morning, when he would otherwise have been sitting in deep meditation, he, with his disciple, started in search of the patient. They soon found her and Swamiji explained to her the purpose of his visit and rendered to her the devout service. What the medicine could not do for her, this psychic massage did, and she at once felt relieved.

At the invitation of devotees of the Lord, Swamiji frequently undertook lightning tours of India. In 1925 he visited Sherkot Estate, Dampur. The Rani of Sherkot, Srimati Phulkumari Devi, gave him a cordial reception. He conducted bhajans there on several days and gave medical aid to the villagers. The Maharani of Mandi, Sri Lalitha Kumari Devi, also attended the bhajans. She used to say: "I cannot forget Swamiji's melodious and inspiring songs. They are ever in my memory. I can feel their influence. They lulled me and elevated my soul."

The sweet and melodious songs which constantly flowed from Swamiji's lips and his inspired lectures and august personality prompted the devout and spiritually inclined Rani and the authorities of the estate to persuade him to stay on. However, the idea of staying there permanently did not appeal at all; he decided to quit and did so immediately. It was a delicate situation, so he slipped away unnoticed and without informing anyone.

With nothing except one cloth around his waist and another thrown on his shoulders, he began to march back to Rishikesh. It was mid-winter. He had to starve for days together, drinking the pure energising water of the Ganges only. The cold was biting, but he kept himself warm by uttering the name of the Lord with every breath.

Mother earth provided him with a grassy bed at night and he slept, unconscious of the cold blast that blew over him.

Whenever he found a village he would at once get a small gathering together and start singing the Lord's names. He would never mind his own inconveniences. Thus he reached Rishikesh weaker in body but stronger in mind.

Even during the periods of strict and absolute seclusion, Swamiji at once ran to the spot where his inspiration was in greatest need, but when he found out that this was exceeding its limits and he was kept away from his ideal too long, he quit the place, in spite of the fact that a further stay might have earned for him quick fame and comfortable living. His renunciation was so intense that he would not care even to take a few clothes or a blanket with him. He had such an adamantine will that in the

face of great temptation he could hold his own, and even food and personal comforts had a secondary place when compared to spiritual gain. In spite of the pangs of hunger and fatigue, Swamiji would still go on roaring the Lord's names whenever the least opportunity presented itself to him.

Swamiji thus followed the middle path. He loved seclusion, but he was not an isolationist. He said: "Occasional tours helped me to develop all divine qualities and to serve mankind on a larger scale."

Even while travelling in trains he taught yoga exercises to the passengers and gave them simple lessons on japa and meditation. He carried a small medicine chest with him always and gave medical aid to the sick.

He later told his disciples: "During my travels I carried a bundle containing my ink-pot, pens, pencils, pins and study books like Viveka Chudamani, Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma Sutras. I kept some postage stamps too, to attend to urgent correspondence work. I used to go to the railway station two hours before the scheduled train timings. Instead of looking here and there, I would sit under a tree and attend to my writing work. I never kept any address book with me for meeting devotees or friends at important centres of my travel with a view to getting nice food or financial help. I quickly finished the work for which I was travelling and returned to Rishikesh at the first opportunity available."

During this period, Swamiji also undertook pilgrimages to the holy places in the Himalayas.



Walking to Badrinath

With Swami Adwaitanandaji, Swami Balanandaji, and Swami Vidyasagar, Swamiji went to Kedarnath and Badrinath in 1926. They left Rishikesh in the middle of May. Swamiji was in a highly ecstatic mood throughout the pilgrimage. When he met sick pilgrims on the way he rendered medical aid, singing kirtans and songs as he went. He had a bath in the warm waters of the Tapta Kunda, and in the ice cold waters of the Alakananda at Badrinath. Not one moment was wasted in idle talk; he always conversed with Swami Adwaitanandaji on vedanta.

On their return journey, from Devaprayag they went to Mussoorie and Tehri and then returned to Rishikesh.

The next yatra in 1930 was to the junction of the Ganges and the sea near Calcutta. This time Maharani Surat Kumari Devi and her secretary were with him. They took the steam boat from Calcutta and reached the Gangasagar early next morning. They had a bath in the sea and then they visited the temple there which is dedicated to the famous Kapila Muni.

On the 12th June Swamiji started on a pilgrimage to Kailash in Western Tibet with His Holiness Sri Swami Adwaitanandaji, Sri Swami Swayam Jyoti Maharaj, Sri Brahmachari Yogananda, Maharani Surat Kumari Devi, O.B.E., of Singhai State, and Sri Kedarnath, her secretary. They all had a dip in the clear blue waters of Lake Manasarovar. From here they walked to Mount Kailas, and then began to walk round the holy mountain. At the first day's halting place they stayed on the bank of the Indus, opposite a Tibetan monastery. That evening, accompanied by Brahmachari Yogananda, Swamiji went up the mountainside to trace the origin of the Indus River. After a tiring climb for a mile over ice and steep rocks, they reached the source — a small stream gushing through blocks of ice. Here Swamiji performed puja to a small block of ice shaped like a lingam, before making the return trip to their camp. Early next morning the party set off to Gauri Kund, a lake situated 18.600 above sea level. Here the air was so rarified that breathing was difficult and they all felt exhausted. Yet, Swamiji broke the ice on the surface of the lake and bathed in the freezing waters. After the circumambulation of Mount Kailas, they returned to the Tibetan border, and thence to Almora. Swamiji's face had become blackened by the fierce cold wind and burning sun, and he had lost fifteen pounds in weight; nevertheless to him the whole journey had been one of immense delight. He said: "Reluctantly you return... and then, by the same route which took you to the region of immortal joy, the holy Kailas, you re-enter the land of endless suffering, disharmony and misery."



On the way to Mount Kailas

Mount Kailas is called Mount Meru — the axis of the earth. There is no place on this earth which can be compared with Kailas for the marvellous beauty of the everlasting snow. Of all yatras (pilgrimages), the Kailas trip is the most difficult. Swamiji walked the whole distance to and fro — 460 miles in all.

Even during this trip Swamiji was serving patients on the way. When people took rest when they were tired of walking, he was busy with his medical service. He gave emetine injections and saved the life of a Bengali sadhu.

Samadhi

As Swamiji advanced further in the practice of meditation he would deny himself all food, company and talk. He plunged deeper and deeper into samadhi and kept himself within closed doors for many days at a stretch. His fellow-sadhus were wonderstruck — they wondered what he was made of. Not a day's relaxation would he permit himself.

Thus it went on from day to day, week after week and month after month for five long years, when on a blessed day in 1929 or 1930 Swamiji reached the goal of all sadhana. About this Swamiji says in his autobiography:

I paid special attention to simple living, high thinking, light food, deep study, silent meditation and regular prayers. I loved seclusion and observed the vow of silence. I did not like company and idle talk. From the Ram Ashram library in Muni-ki-Reti I used to get some books, and devoted some time to study every day. Rest and relaxation gave me enough strength to carry on intense sadhana. I moved closely with some holy men but I never indulged in discussion and debates. Self-analysis and introspection were my guide. I spent much time in meditation and practised various kinds of yogas in my sadhana, and my experiences have all come out in many of my books as advice to aspirants. It was usual for even great mystics to keep their rare knowledge as a secret and teach only a chosen few, but I quickly sent out my thoughts and experiences to help the world and struggling seekers after Truth.

The actual date and the nature of his realisation Swamiji kept to himself, though we gathered from chance remarks that fell from his lips that during periods of deep meditation he had the darshan of the Upanishadic sages (maharishis of yore) and also of Lord Krishna. He wrote:

It would be easy to dismiss the question by saying, "Yes, after a prolonged period of intense austerities and meditation while I was living ir Swarg Ashram, during which I had the darshan of a number of maharishis and their blessings, the Lord appeared before me in the form of Sri Krishna," but that would not be the whole truth, nor a sufficient answer to a question relating to God Who is unlimited, infinite and beyond the reach of the mind and speech. Even in worldly experience you cannot express taste. You

cannot express the taste of an apple to one who has not tasted it, nor can you explain the nature of colour to a blind man. The state of samadhi is all joy, bliss and peace; this much only can be said. One has to feel this for oneself."

About this experience he wrote the following:

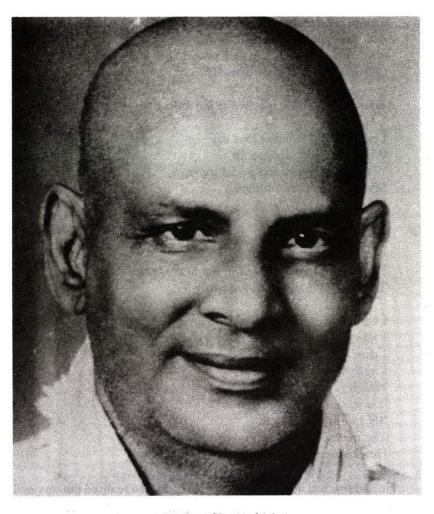
I celebrated this auspicious day
With great eclat and pomp,
With illumination and joyful songs.
My wish has been fulfilled
I have met my Beloved.
How shall I find words
For the beauty of my Beloved?
He is brilliant like millions of suns,
He has enthroned himself in my heart.
The lamp of love burns lustrously.

I bathed Him with the water of love
I adorned Him with the flowers of love,
I gave him butter and sugar-candy.
I have drunk the cup of love,
Which is filled to the brim.
It is the cup of perfect joy.
My rapture wells forth.
The mercy of my Lord has come upon me.
How blessed am I who has seen my Beloved.

He had reached the summit of sadhana, he had realised the very end and aim of all spiritual practices; there was no more need to practise austerities. Samadhi had become natural with him; he was ever in communion with the Self without any conscious effort.

Swamiji declared to a biographer that he never had any set-backs in his sadhana; nor had he ever to struggle with his mind. No hurdles presented themselves before him during the period. It was quite smooth sailing throughout.

It does not mean, however, that he had always a bed of roses during his sadhana period. He had undergone many sufferings during his period of austerity and after; but inwardly he was always full of joy and bliss which made him immune to the apparent trials and tribulations.



Radiant Sivananda

Sri Swami Narayanandaji, one of the earliest disciples, revealed that Swamiji did not have any obstacles in sadhana because he was ever vigilant. He never allowed the little ripples of temptation and slackness in sadhana to assume the mighty proportions of serious obstacles. His mind and senses were his slaves and he made no mistake about it.

When he found the wisdom that would put an end to human misery he was afire with zeal and earnestness to share it with all. It was then that he had the inner urge to launch forth on an extensive campaign for the propagation of spiritual knowledge. The fire of divine knowledge that emanated from his heart consumed all ignorance from the hearts of all who approached him; and his utterances and writings after this period shone with a special light and had the air of unmistakable authority. People flocked to him and listened to him spell-bound. The majority of the audience did not understand English, and he always spoke in English; yet they listened to him, for there was a 'special something' in his very presence.

BIRTH OF THE MISSION

The First Book

In spite of the lack of proper facilities and food, Swamiji was able to do a tremendous amount of work. He would attend to patients, dictate some notes to students, write articles to newspapers and answer questions of pilgrims during the 'interview hour'.

Working thus he was able to contribute to several journals and newspapers: e.g. Kalyan, Bhakti, Parloki, Sankirtan, Vision,

Lokopakari, Peace, Meher Gazette, Santi, The Student, etc.

What is more wonderful, he was able to write a book and get it published in 1929. The book was Practice of Yoga — Volume 1. This was his first book. He had no typewriter, nor did he have paper or even sufficient money to procure it; and even if he had some money there was no shop nearby to supply him with notebook or paper. Headed by Swamiji, many sadhus 'invaded' Rishikesh and went into the various places in the locality to ransack the wastepaper heaps in search of small sheets of paper or envelopes. The blank sheets and inner sides of the envelopes were then stitched as notebooks. He had no lantern, but used an empty inkbottle, filled it with kerosene oil, and made a wick from a few threads of material. With this light he worked far into the night. He had no assistant to make out a copy for him. Yet, a thrilling volume emerged.

At first Swamiji did not know any publishers, but he had a novel way of getting his early articles published. When he had written an inspiring article in his home-made 'notebook' he would send it to 'The Postmaster, Madras' (or Lucknow or Calcutta etc.) with a covering note saying

"These are the thoughts that occurred to me yesterday. I think that they are inspiring. So please have a small leaflet printed. You can distribute them. Print as many as you like but please send me 100 copies." One postmaster sent the 100 copies with a note: "I admire your confidence"! As he became more widely known publishers sought him.

The First Disciples

It was at this time that Swamiji initiated his first disciples into sannyas. The first disciple was Swami Satchidananda. There is not much information available now about this noble swami, though we know that he was living with Swamiji when Swami Paramanandaji joined him in 1932.

Paramanandaji wrote to Swamiji when he was at Madras in railway service and Swamiji was in Swarg Ashram. He was highly inspired by Swamiji's first book, *Practice of Yoga — Volume 1*, and he wanted to have Swamiji's darshan and, if possible, stay with him and serve him as a direct disciple. A few letters which he wrote to Paramanandaji in reply are highly revealing. The first one is dated 29th August, 1930. Here is an extract:

You are a man of spiritual samskaras (tendencies). Nurture them. Perfect them. Increase them. Do not come here. Manage to get entry in Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's Ashram at Pondicherry, or the Ramakrishna Mission. You will improve there decidedly. Stick to any of them like a leech. Mere juvenile enthusiasm will not do; mere emotions will not do in the spiritual path. It is not a rosy path, it is full of thorns, scorpions and snakes. The path is rugged, precipitous and extremely difficult, but easy for a man with the strong determination: "I must realise or I will give up my life". A strong thirst for knowledge is needed. Keep a diary of spiritual progress. Record everything. In future send me stamps for my reply.

This is in Swamiji's characteristic style. The second letter, dated 3rd October, 1930, reveals that the future disciple was steadfast in his noble wish, and therefore it is filled with wholesome advice:

Save as much money as possible. Put it in postal cash certificates for five years. It will bring good interest. In these days money is needed, even for sannyasins, as there is lack of sympathy from

house-holders. Attend the Ramakrishna Mission at Mylapore. Have two important pleasure-centres: study and meditation. Cut off all external pleasure-centres.

The third letter, dated the 12th December 1930, shows that the disciple had decided to meet the master. Hence, clear directions are given to guide him at Rishikesh on arrival; and yet, Swamiji persisted in his 'evaluation tactics':

Kindly stay in Swarg Ashram for some days. You will enjoy the solitude and spiritual vibration undoubtedly. Stay with Swami Satchidanandaji. Tell my name. He will accommodate you. He will serve you. There is another Swami Balananda in Kutir 31. He will help you till I come there. Please ascertain my address from the Postmaster at Rishikesh and communicate to me of your arrival. That will be nice. Kindly have the darshan of Swami Adwaitanandaji and Tapovan Swamiji also. They are both good sannyasins. Go to Brahmapuri forest and see Swami Purushottamanandaji. They are all my intimate friends.

Another point... Kindly listen... Do not be hasty in leaving the world. World is an arena for developing various sattvic (pure) qualities. World is the best teacher for those who want to be benefited. Remain there for some time longer. Earn and enjoy virtuous life and save. Vairagya (dispassion) comes out of bhoga (enjoyment). Then it will be strong, steady and intense. Do not marry. That is a different point. World is not a hell. It is all ananda (bliss) when ego and raga-dvesha (likes and dislikes) die away. Change the mental attitude. Come and see all these holy places and persons. That will inspire you. But do not leave the world so soon. The spiritual path is not at all rosy. It is full of thorns.

Paramanandaji had obviously decided to follow the programme chalked out by Swamiji. The next letter from Swamiji dated 17th January 1931, gives us a glimpse of the intense divine love the master had for the future glorious disciple, and the eagerness on his part that the disciple should be well equipped for the tasks ahead:

Your devotion towards God and religion will doubtless elevate you from the worldly mire. May God bestow on you spiritual strength and power to attain the goal of life — God-realisation. Kindly join

the Ramakrishna Mission. There you will improve a lot. I promise you, I assure you. Stick to the Mission for some years. You may come here for visiting and not for permanent stay. Look before you leap. Think. Consider. Never resign the job. You will repent later on. Save as much as possible. This is important. Work for some more years. World is the best teacher. You have to learn a lot. Do not be hasty. Youthful buoyancy and juvenile enthusiasm may not help much. This line is an arduous, hazardous path.

The disciple, after deep deliberation, accepted the guru's instruction — mentally he had already assumed the discipleship — and he therefore joined the Ramakrishna Mission. Here is the letter Swamiji wrote in 1931, congratulating Paramanandaji and wishing him godspeed in the spiritual venture:

I have returned from a long Kailash trip. I am in due receipt of your kind letter. I congratulate you on your bold spiritual adventure. It bespeaks very highly of you. You have done a very good thing in joining the Ramakrishna Mission. May God give you spiritual strength and redoubled force in your efforts to realise Brahman. You have cut asunder all the earthly ties. Now you can proceed unhampered on your way. Stick to the Mission and serve all your elders with respect and sincerity and disinterestedness.

And then, as though foreseeing that Paramanandaji would soon be joining him, Swamiji gave him golden advice for moulding himself into a good monk:

Speak the truth at any cost. Speaking the truth cannot harm anybody. It gives spiritual power. Truth can be achieved only by speaking the truth. Control anger by developing patience, cosmic love, service and compassion. You must cultivate humility, magnanimity and courage. Six hours of study and six hours of meditation, etc., must go on uninterruptedly. Forget the past. Live in the solid present. Give up all sorts of fancied expectations. Even if people persecute you, hate you and mock at you, keep quiet. Don't revenge. Study the 'Sermon on the Mount' (St. Matthew) daily, before you proceed to work. I shall quote one passage. If you remember this once daily, it will give you moksha (liberation). Practice it unceasingly at all costs. 'Love your enemies. Bless them

that curse you. Do good to them that hate you and pray for those who despise you and persecute you.' The practice is difficult but can be done and must be done.

Swami Paramanandaji came to Rishikesh. He related his experience of his first days in the ashram:

One day I entered Swami Sivananda's kutir. He welcomed me with great joy. In an indifferent mood I asked him for spiritual instructions. He asked me: "Do you know how to do namaskar to elders and sadhus?" I felt shy. Then falling flat on the ground, he gave a practical demonstration. I felt as if the mighty Himalayas fell on the ground! Then there was a heavy downpour of fiery words: "Young aspirants are egoistic, arrogant and reckless. They do not know how to bend. They do not have control over the senses. They foolishly aspire for nirvana and siddhis without proper preparation. Service, service, service to mahatmas and the sick alone can efficiently purify the heart and bring rapid spiritual progress. Carry water from kutir to kutir and attend on sick persons with faith and the correct inner attitude. Massage the legs of the sick. Wash their clothes. Do you get up at 4 a.m.? How many malas of japa do you do daily? How many hours of mauna do you observe daily? Why do you laugh aloud and waste your energy and time in gossip? Where is the time for joking? Show me your daily routine and the way you spend the twenty-four hours." I was dumbfounded. I stood like a statue, unable to breathe. At the end, after doing namaskar (prostration), I left the place and seriously thought over the questions. I wrote them on a piece of paper. This first thunderstorm from a mahatma opened my eyes. I carefully awaited opportunities to watch him and learn more.

Since Swamiji had given him a stern warning against hasty renunciation of the world, Paramanandaji, even after he met Swamiji in Swarg Ashram, remained as a brahmachari (a novitiate). As was the rule, the kshetras would give food only to sannyasins. But Swamiji, who had great influence, recommended that as a special case the white-clothed young man be given food. After some time, however, the food would be stopped, and once again Swamiji would have to go to the kshetra and recommend that the food be continued. Six months passed by like this and, as Paramananda himself says in his book Sivananda: Apostle of Peace and

Love, "Swamiji had to go to the kshetra twenty times."

At that time there were three young men undergoing training under Swamiji — Prakash Chaitanya, Vivek Chaitanya and Paramananda-ji — as well as a very learned man who lived nearby with his family. Paramanandaji tried to make this learned man join the small band of disciples. "If you take sannyas," said the man, "I will take sannyas." Paramanandaji agreed.

Swami Paramananda related:

I was a very talkative man even in early age. I therefore naturally used to attract many young men for talking. While going for bhiksha to the kshetra and also in the queue I used to engage myself fully in talking with them. Swamiji used to notice this. One day Swamiji called me and took me to task. He said: "You are a sannyasin. When you go to the kshetra I find you invariably engaged in unnecessary talking. As a sannyasin you should go out covering your head, be aloof from the crowd, take your bhiksha quickly without anyone's notice, and absorb yourself in work always. That is sadhana." Swamiji warned me about this habit of talking even here in the present ashram. I used to sit in the room behind Swamiji's and give instructions to the other man with me about ashram work. Even this talk Swamiji did not like; he told me several times not to talk much and to engage myself in mental japa while working.

Swami Paramananda gave further insight into Swamiji's methods:

A couple of years after I first met Swami Sivananda I wrote a book under the pseudonym 'Ananda'. The book was published only two years later at Madras. (Now you will not be able to find any copy of the book, except two copies in the Sri Ramashram Library, Muni-ki-Reti. I myself do not know what happened to the rest of the copies.)

In that book I wrote all about the relationship between the guru and the disciple; how the disciple should conduct himself in the presence of the guru and many other items of practical importance to an aspirant just stepping onto the spiritual path. In the very same book I had also mentioned about the various ashrams where I had stayed before, as well as about their different managers and presidents, while describing the unique nature of Swami Siyanan-

daji and his institution that kept me spellbound.

A copy of the book was duly sent to Swami Sivanandaji who wrote me back "Wonderful; excellent!" Within a short time I made ready manuscripts of the second volume of the book (the first book ended with the note that it is being continued in the second volume that awaits publication). All things were ready — press, paper, etc. All of a sudden I received a letter from Sri Swamiji saying, in effect, "Your book is very bad. Do not sell it to anybody. Do not even give it freely. Do not bring out the next volume." I was thunderstruck. "What? Only the other day Swamiji had written appreciating the book and now he condemns it," I thought. From Madras I wrote to Swamiji requesting him to enlighten me as to what he meant. Here is the reply he favoured me with: "Such-and-such a mahatma has written that your book is a frightful attack directly aimed at him and his institution. Your book has offended my friend. It has injured him. Therefore stop sales and drop the second volume as well."

Mark, how large is his heart! What an amount of gracious kindness! Swamiji liked the book very much, but because someone felt offended, the book should not be brought out. "Do not offend anyone. Do not hurt anybody's feelings": this is what Sri Swamiji preaches to everyone today. This is what I learned from him on that day.

Amongst the early disciples Swamiji had a few who were older than himself. The following two anecdotes narrated by Swami Paramanandaji in his book *Life and Sayings of Siva* written in 1934, are illuminating:

Swami Jnananandaji, aged 70, a disciple and a jnani who hails from Andhra, is a very pure man. Whenever he wants to know something he will be asked by all to go to Swamiji. Immediately he will say, "I tremble to stand before Swamiji. How can I go and ask him?" People with corrupted hearts, selfish desires and arrogant natures cannot grasp his glory. The spiritual glory in Swamiji can only be grasped by advanced people like Jnananandaji.

Swami Vidyanandaji, aged 60, a Bengali, was very weak and sick, and could not even walk a few steps. Once he approached Swamiji for blessings. Swamiji simply said to him: 'You will be alright'. In a week's time he was completely cured and was soon able to walk. Whenever I met him, he said: "If I utter the name, Sivananda,

nothing is impossible for me". Swamiji's mere name fills all with new vigour and hope and removes all troubles.

For the purpose of carrying on the mission Swamiji chose his disciples with great care. He wanted erudite scholars, hard workers, devotees and also aged, venerable men. Everyone was chosen for his particular talents. For instance, no work was expected from anyone except the workers. There were yet others who belonged to none of the above categories. They served a highly mysterious purpose and were there only to test the good qualities of Swamiji himself and the other disciples. Of course, they were given opportunities by Swamiji to learn and evolve. One such was an old man who came to Swamiji in Swarg Ashram. He made a dramatic entrance and said to Swamiji: "I had a dream last night in which I saw my guru; he asked me to initiate you into sannyas. You can fix a date and I will give you the proper initiation." Swamiji informed him that he had already received initiation from Sri Swami Viswanandaji Maharaj. A few days later the same old man came and requested Swamiji to initiate him into sannyasa. As he was not a bona fide sannyasin, the kshetra had refused to give him food! The wonder of it was that Swamiji did not refuse or laugh at him, but gave him the initiation asked for. Obviously his compassionate heart was moved to pity — the man needed the garb to get his food.

This new disciple came to Swamiji one day and said: "I know everything in vedanta; therefore, give me the title of Vedanta Kesari (Lion of Vedanta)."

Swamiji, in his childlike simplicity, immediately declared: "Yes, yes: you are a Vedanta Kesari." This wonderful Swami went about proclaiming that Swamiji had recognised him as such. Then, surprisingly enough, a few days later he said to Swami Paramanandaji: "Swami Sivananda does not know anything about vedanta. I know everything. Give him up and become my disciple."

Paramanandaji said that although Swamiji knew Brahmananda was talking ill of him, he insisted that they serve the old man and confirm the title of Vedanta Kesari he had conferred upon him.

Even from the beginning of Swamiji's apostolic mission he was not particular whether his co-workers or even disciples owed total allegiance to him or not. He would initiate aspirants into sannyasa who were the disciples of other mahatmas, and would let his own sannyasin disciples serve other saints and mahatmas. For instance, very soon after Swami Paramanandaji joined Swamiji, H.H. Sri Omkarji of Shanti Ashram

paid a visit to Swarg Ashram and requested Swamiji to lend Paramanandaji's services to him for some time. Swamiji immediately agreed, although Paramanandaji was his only assistant at that time. In one of the letters received by Paramanandaji at Shanti Ashram, Swamiji instructed him: "Prostrate at the feet of Sister Sushila, Swami Omkarji and inmates of the ashram, including scavengers, the first thing every morning."

Sri Swami Atmanandaji Maharaj was the disciple of Mataji Omkareshwariji. Mataji directed Atmanandaji to have the sannyas diksha from Swamiji, who readily initiated him into the holy order. It was never his habit to extract a promise, from those whom he accepted as his disciples, that they should serve him and him alone. He gave them initiation when he noticed the eagerness in them for entering the holy order. They were at liberty to live with him and serve him or go away. However, Sri Swami Atmanandaji was an asset to Swamiji's mission especially in its formative years. He accompanied Swamiji during his tours and helped him in his work to a very great extent.

Later Swami Paramananda was sent to Madras to work on Swamiji's books. Swamiji wanted his disciples to shine as he himself shone. This aspect is beautifully brought out in his letters to Swami Paramananda where he gave detailed instructions about the way the disciple should conduct himself in order to spread the message. Thoroughness in everything was one of his greatest characteristics.

A letter dated 4th March, 1933, reads as follows:

I wish you to approach the headmasters of all the high schools in Madras and suburbs and arrange for a lecture on brahmacharya (celibacy), asana and pranayama demonstrations. Give bhastrika, sitali and measured purak-kumbhak-rechak pranayama. You will be doing wonderful service. You can read the brahmacharya paper. Read slowly with emphasis, force and fire with gestures, looking at the audience. If you think the paper is a lengthy one, omit the middle one or two pages. Don't fail to do this work. This same work I did in nine schools during my travels. You must conduct bhajans or kirtans at night at various places. What you have in stock is quite sufficient. In the evening or morning read my papers and explain. Have a small selected gathering. In the end, give your message in a few words, with OM-chanting. Do these three sorts of activities and send me a short report of your activities, now and then. Never make false excuses. Don't be diffident. Distribute medicines. Menthol oil can be applied to the head in head-aches.

One drop, well shaken with one ounce of water, will make peppermint water, like chlorodyne water, useful in digestion, wind, etc. You can use 20 m. of Tr. Cardamom Co. also. Rub oil of Menthol to parts where there is nervous pain — neuralgia.

In the course of his letter dated 6th March, Swamiji gave further instructions:

I want you to do these things energetically. You must become a powerful organiser. I want you to start amongst your friends who have faith, a 'Yoga Society', 'Vedantic Society' and 'Sankirtan Association'. Sow the seed now, it will sprout, blossom and bear fruit. At present it can be founded in a room. Even if five members meet regularly it will suffice. Also a 'Philosophical Library'. Print some letterheads, forms and leaflets for the Association and Society. Make a signboard. The Aims and Objects of the Society are:

- (1) To attain Self-realisation.
- (2) To promote universal love and brotherhood.
- (3) To disseminate spiritual knowledge.

I will send my leaflets, pamphlets, books, etc.

To conclude, here is one of the most inspiring of Swamiji's letters written on 8th March, 1933:

You should have regular, systematic meditation, japa and study, daily. Don't think: "I will study when I am alone in Uttarkashi." That is wrong. That is foolishness. You must have the daily habit. That tomorrow will never come. Make hay while the sun shines. Winnow the corn when the wind blows. Concentrate. Meditate. Live alone for some hours. Be polite. Never be arrogant. Have tolerance and patience. Manifest these virtues while at work and while talking. Watch every thought. There is no play. You have taken a responsible gown. Do you feel this? Don't beg. Don't ask with the begging spirit. Command. Everything will come. The whole world is your own home. Feel this. Show me and send me your organised work. Send me occasional reports. Method and discipline is necessary. Have implicit faith in your inner Self and God. Scrutinise your motives. Destroy selfish motives. Destroy all sorts of meanness. Become noble, noble in every inch of your actions. Don't fight for petty trifles. Regeneration of the diabolical nature is imperative. SIVA.



The First Evangelical Mission

"You cannot live without religion. You cannot live without the name of the Lord. Take refuge in His sweet name. Live in God. Live in Brahman. This world is only a halting place. Persevere in your sadhana (spiritual practice). Lead a life of selfless service, renunciation, dispassion and meditation. Resort to men of God and their writings. Meditate. Enquire 'Who am I?' Ignorance will vanish. Knowledge of Truth will dawn. Climb steadily and reach the peak of wisdom by intensifying your dispassion and practising intense sadhana."

This was the gist of the first sermon that Swamiji delivered at Sitapur, where he went on the 20th November, 1932 for his first major dynamic spiritual awakening campaign. He was accompanied by Sri Swami Atmananda who sang kirtans, etc., and Swami Swaroopananda who translated his lectures into Hindi.

Swamiji's one burning passion at that time was to let the Lord's name resound in every nook and corner of India. He had tasted the nectar of the divine name and experienced its miraculous life-transforming power. He wanted to share the joy and the glory with all. He had seen God and wanted to show others the way. He was ready to plunge into intense dynamic spiritual service.

In a week the entire atmosphere of Sitapur was filled with the vibrations of the Lord's names. People listened to him in thousands, because they knew that here was a man who had nothing in the world to call his own and yet was happier and more peaceful, more full of energy and enthusiasm than even the richest amongst them. They wanted to get the secret from him; and he, too, was ready and eager to give it to them.

He sang, he danced, his kirtans stirred the listeners, his celestial dance transported them to another realm. They had never seen anything like that before.

In the intervals between two sessions of sankirtan he would deliver short lectures in which he laid the greatest emphasis on selfless service, charity and purity, etc. At times he also dealt with vedanta because of its soul-elevating value. The words that he uttered came from the very depth of his heart. They had tremendous power. A young boy illustrated this. He had heard Swamiji's lecture in his school. The next morning his father found a letter in the bed instead of his son! The letter read: "Father. This is my last salutation to you. I am going in quest of my real father, the Lord, the Indweller of my heart. I am moved by the lecture of Swami Sivananda. My eyes are open now, this is my real duty. God-realisation is my highest duty."



This man of mysterious power over men was mysterious in his ways, too. Once when he was at Sitapur he felt an intense urge to seclude himself and meditate. He left the place without informing anyone and walked a long distance from the city till he came to a dilapidated hut. Here he sat and meditated for the whole day.

Sitapur was only the beginning. From there he was invited to Lakshmipur, Meerut, Lucknow, Monghyr and Shanti Ashram, Totapalli Hills. In all these places there were similar programmes. There would be kirtan in the early morning — 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. Then the whole party would move around the different parts of the town singing the Lord's names for two hours. In Monghyr the party went round in a lorry for several hours, covering almost the whole town and neighbourhood, from lane to lane and from street to street. After a week of this kirtan-singing the whole town would be charged with spiritual vibrations.

The people of the town would get to know of the conference that was to be held and would take part in the various functions. Swamiji also conducted continuous chanting for seven days in some places with trained groups of kirtanists taking part. On the closing day many poor people were fed.

The programmes were held in various venues — in pilgrim hostels, temples and schools etc. There were huge gatherings at each town, sometimes as many as 10,000 people would gather. When he sang a certain kirtan — Agada-bhum — thousands would get up and dance. He sang philosophical songs in English, attracting Europeans as well as educated Indians.

Another unique feature was the group kirtan. Here Swamiji would select government officers from the audience to lead kirtan from the platform. Then he invited college professors, doctors, students, ladies and girls. This was a novel feature and created great enthusiasm. At first they all hesitated and felt shy, but they soon felt the benefit. After some months they became staunch kirtanists and established groups in various towns.

Swamiji utilised all opportunities to the best advantage. He did kirtan while riding on an elephant, in trains and on station platforms and in streets and roads when he met a big party of people.

Along with the kirtan Swamiji would deliver short lectures with demonstrations of yoga exercises and pranayama, and he would distribute the pamphlets Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions and Importance of Brahmacharya. He asked people to keep up the writing of mantras. Many devotees sat motionless in public meetings, writing mantras and observing silence during the period. He distributed prizes to those who wrote the largest number of mantras legibly. As encouragement he gave spiritual books not only to the winners in the competitions, but also to others. Devotees used to bring a lot of fruits, and these were distributed to the audience then and there.

Every year for a week or two he travelled in the Punjab and Bihar. Invariably the organisers would chalk out a tight programme. During such tours he asked his students in Swarg Ashram and the postmaster at Rishikesh not to redirect any letters. He did not attend to correspondence work during the tour but concentrated on dynamic dissemination of knowledge.

During his tours he never allowed anyone to introduce him to the audience, and there was no chairman to preside over the functions. He broke all formalities; even though he was the president of the conference he would sit amongst the audience. He welcomed all guests and at the end thanked all persons on behalf of the conference, never allowing anyone to thank him.

Though Swamiji lived a simple life, eating ordinary dry bread (roties) at Rishikesh, while he was on tour and doing such intense work day and night he felt the need for energy-giving food and fruits, so he ask-

ed the organisers to keep a supply of biscuits and fruit available for himself and his disciples. He used to keep a few pieces of bread or biscuits in his pocket, because the work in various places did not allow him any time for meals or rest. His students who accompanied him on the tours invariably said: "It is all joy to travel with Swamiji for the wonderful treatment he gives." He shared with them all that he had and took great care of their health and made them very popular and well-known.

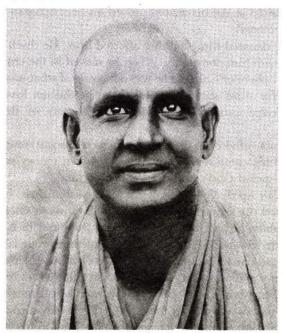
Before starting for such conferences he kept enough money with him for his return fare. He never demanded money from the organisers of the functions for expenses, but asked them to print a large number of copies of leaflets and pamphlets in different languages for wide circulation during the conference. Many pamphlets and leaflets were printed for free distribution.

There were more invitations and then people began pouring into Swarg Ashram, pressing him to preside over sankirtan conferences and vedantic conferences. Swamiji was almost constantly on tour. Punjab and Kashmir were two fields in which his influence was especially noticeable: the people there had great regard for him.

The first Punjab Provincial Sankirtan Conference was held at Lahore in 1935. It was there that the members of the conference took 'resolves' or pledges in sadhana, thus giving a solid shape of sadhana to their activities. The Qilla Guzzar Sankirtan Mandal at Lahore became the pivot of all these sankirtan activities, with Sri Ganga Saran Varma as the leader. It was through the efforts of Sri Varma, in particular, that *The Divine Life* magazine was started from Lahore. During those days it was an extraordinary sight for all to see the 'Ganga Nivas' ever humming with sankirtan and Divine Life Society's activities. It was, in fact, a spiritual factory organised by Swamiji.

The next conference was even more wonderful and eventful. In this session of the Lahore Sankirtan conference the Punjabi devotees were fortunate enough to experience the divine bliss of sankirtan-samadhi (state of super-consciousness) in Swamiji. Standing firmly erect in samadhi, gazing at the immense gathering before him with sambhavi mudra (where the yogi appears to be looking at external objects but is not actually perceiving them as his mind is indrawn), sending out divine rays of revelation, Swamiji transformed the entire gathering; bringing on ecstacy, singing and weeping in some, and actual unconsciousness in others. One seven year old child every now and then went into some extraordinary ecstasy, and one girl called Savitri Devi of Ludhiana while singing and dancing lost all body-consciousness and came back to body-

consciousness only when Swamiji concluded the meeting with the loud repetition of 'Jaya Jaya Sita Ram'.



Sambhavi mudra

During his early tours, Swamiji used to carry a bag of medicines and a bag of free tracts in his hand. The bag was a miniature shop. It contained a knife, scissors, tape, matchbox, candle, some sweets for children, tablets, powders, stationery, red pencil and other things necessary for service on the spot. His nature was such that he would note a man's need even before it was expressed; and once a request was made he could not rest till it was fulfilled, so it was done then and there. His urge to oblige did not brook delay.

On occasions he was invited by devotees to do sankirtan when he was not well and running a temperature that would keep any other man in bed. Swamiji would ignore the fever and immediately get up. Even when he had an attack of diarrhoea due to over-strain from a train journey and irregular food, he could not say 'no' to a request for kirtan. To the dismay of his disciples he asked for a sanitary pan to be kept ready in an ante-chamber and, wearing rubber underpants, he mounted the platform in the hall and poured forth his stirring kirtan. The burning desire to see others profited and pleased animated all his actions. One

may call this recklessness, but as a rule Swamiji was very careful about his health. He maintained, however, that sacrifice was essential when the occasion required it. All his actions proved his firm belief in the doctrine of 'living for others'.

Nothing daunted him; nothing affected him. He dwelt in the Lord and He was with him constantly. When he moved in the crowded streets of Lucknow, Lahore or Calcutta he was not aware of what was going on in the streets. His mind was on the work, but he did not lose his state of sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi (natural non-dual state of Brahmic consciousness).

He did not mind even if some people were discourteous. If they did not attend to his comforts, he would use his own money without complaining. To spread God's name was all-important.

On the 5th April, 1949, a professor from Kashmir who had migrated to India visited the ashram with his family. Swamiji at once recognised him as one whom he had known during his kirtan-tour in Kashmir. The professor said: "Swamiji! How well we all remember your famous Agada Bhum song and dance! In spite of all that has happened since those days of peace, plenty and prosperity, the memory is still fresh in us of the eager throngs of men, women and children who would sit through whole days listening to your sweet soul-stirring kirtan. I was only a small boy then; but I have the most vivid memory of this one thing in my life."

The professor's father added: "And what gatherings, Swamiji! In all my life in Kashmir I have never again seen such masses of humanity assembled together. Not less than ten thousand every day — and it looked like a sea of heads that swung to and fro like waves, to the tune of Swamiji's kirtans. It was a sight for the gods!" They narrated their experience with tears of love and ecstasy in their eyes. It was as though Swamiji sang and danced even then before their mental eyes.

Sri Desraj Sachdev, a great devotee of Swamiji, gave this thrilling account of Swamiji's tours when he visited the ashram on the 17th January, 1950:

In 1933 we were trying to conduct a sankirtan conference at Rawalpindi... It was difficult to collect any funds for the purpose of convening the conference. However, two or three of us decided to contribute our month's salary to conduct it. We invited Sri Swamiji Maharaj and a few others. Swamiji came, and in a day endeared himself to the hearts of all people in Rawalpindi.

On the day of the conference several local youngsters came out of

mere curiosity: "What can sankirtan do?" Swamiji began to deliver a most thrilling and inspiring lecture in English, and this was translated into Hindi by Sri Swami Swaroopanandaji. Everyone was greatly impressed by his lecture on bhakti and sankirtan. Immediately he began, "Sunaja sunaja sunaja Krishna; tu gitawala jnana sunaja Krishna." The entire audience was transported into the realms of bliss. In a few moments Swamiji began to dance. It was a sight to see! Everyone danced with him; even those who a few minutes before did not even believe in sankirtan, danced in public on the same platform with Swamiji. It was indeed a miracle.

However, he also cautioned common-sense. Once when certain disciples of his were shouting loudly, "Sivananda Maharaj ki jai," he stopped them and said, "Don't be emotional in anything, not even in your prayers and praises of the Lord. Have full control over your feelings and emotions. The bliss of the Absolute cannot be fully manifested in dancing and howling out." His teaching was complete. His training was perfect.

Swamiji was a real mahatma as very few are. He had a divine magnetic personality that could influence people. No one else could do that. When rationalists saw that such an educated and cultured mahatma like Swamiji — who could deliver thundering lectures in English before huge audiences — sang sweet kirtans and danced ecstatically, even their scepticism in regard to kirtan flew and they too joined in.

Rich people surrounded Swamiji in Rawalpindi, but Swamiji loved to move amongst the poorest of the poor. He would mix very freely with scavengers and labourers and make them sing kirtan. This, too, is very rare. Mahatmas nowadays only want to make money and therefore only heed the invitations of zamindars! The most important of all the qualifications that made him unique, was that he had an absolutely spotless character.

At a conference in Lahore in 1933 it was revealed that Swamiji was a sannyasin of the Kevala Advaita Order who knew English, and that he had a novel way of sankirtan propaganda. From the very first sitting, the conference attracted about ten thousand devotees every night.

The whole of Lahore was saturated with the sacred sweet vibration of God's name. The following day there were Punjabi youths, who knew English, eager to see the erudite vedantic orator singing and dancing on a sankirtan platform which had, till then, been meant for the Vaishnava bhaktas (devotees) of the pure Vaishnava bhakti cult. It was an extraordinary sight for the whole of the Punjab to see a sannyasin of a high order, well-versed in advaita (monism) philosophy, singing and dancing on a sankirtan platform, with quite a novel way of his own. Swamiji's philosophical discourses on bhakti, jnana and yoga, along with his sweet, soul-stirring. elevating sankirtan and English and Manipravala (an amalgam of languages) songs in tunes of different varieties on various subjects, attracted the intelligentsia and the aristocracy who would never have attended a religious gathering. There was also a cross section of the community and representatives of various sects. The very first night an old Arya Samajist joined Swamiji in his sankirtan and Swamiji made the old man dance on the platform with him. He was followed the next day by one modern young man dressed in a business suit who openly confessed that he was there to make fun of a singing and dancing sannyasi who knew English. But, to the surprise of all, he was then and there converted into a veteran sankirtanist

It was the first time in Lahore that there was such a big gathering of all classes of people. The old and the young, ladies and children, the married and the unmarried groups, sang and danced on the sankirtan platform in turns. All collected together on a common platform and kept awake until past midnight, sleeping till morning in the tent so that they might not miss the golden opportunity of hearing Swamiji again the next morning in brahma-muhurta (4 a.m. to 6 a.m.).

The Punjabi bhaktas would surround Swamiji for darshan like bees. It was a himalayan task for Swamiji to snatch a few minutes to take a little rest. Those who were requested to allow Swamiji some time for a little rest would complain to Swamiji himself that his disciples were more like thorns around a rose and would not allow them to have his darshan. In reply, Swamiji would smilingly remark that it was for the sake of the rose only that the all-merciful Lord had created the thorns around it!

Swamiji had novel methods of taking the maximum advantage of these conferences. Unlike others who presided over them and then forgot all about them, Swamiji utilised them to build up a mission. He would not allow the people who attended the conferences to forget what they had learnt. He had the foresight to plan well ahead what steps should be taken to achieve the goal. The letters reproduced below contain interesting details in regard to Swamiji's faultless methods and the thoroughness with which he prepared the field for his future mission. The letters were all written to Sri Swami Paramanandaji, who had been especially appointed by Swamiji to go to Lahore to organise the conferences on a grand scale.

A letter dated 3rd December 1935, reads thus:

Kindly proceed direct to Lahore immediately and organise the function splendidly, beautifully, philosophically, with Swami Virakthanandaji Maharaj.

You will have to lecture at least for five minutes in English and Hindi. Do kirtan also, with dance, whether the body is willing or stiff and refuses to move in these cold days. If there is difficulty in lecturing, kindly cram a few points. If cramming is also difficult, read a piece of paper. If you show or exhibit your foolish obstinacy like Gopal Bhai sometimes, there is no other course for me than to carry you and put you on the platform. Don't give room to this extreme manoeuvre.

The letter dated 13th December contains detailed instructions to the organisers about the items on the programme:

Tell Chetu Ramji that I am slightly pleased with him now. Continuous kirtan for 3 days on a separate platform is very, very necessary. This is the only effective part of the work — solid and substantial. Sankirtan in different centres to thrill and electrify the whole atmosphere is another task that lies before us. These two items are important. The riot trouble and Section 144 are nothing before Ram nam. Nothing to be afraid of, even a bit. Swaroopanandaji's words should be carried out. He is the senior advisor of the Sankirtan Board.

We will take toast and butter, both in the morning and at night. We do not want sweets. On 21st morning I expect these items in the morning menu. I think your goodself will also become one of my friends in the circle. One easy chair for me and three chairs with arms are needed for the rooms. Lady volunteers and a large number of trained volunteers are necessary. Pledge forms should be printed as proposed by Sri Swaroopanandaji. Some Shanti Path (Peace Chant) forms are also needed.

How Swamiji honoured his disciples and treated them as his equals is evident from his letters. Most of these letters were signed by him 'Thy humble sevak — Sivananda'. Never was the disciple made to feel that he was inferior to the guru. He wanted them to deliver lectures, sing kirtans and dance as he did. They were co-workers sent to him by the Lord to assist him in the work, to share the work with him, and for that reason he used to have food with them, as one of the above letters shows. He would share with them whatever fruits, etc. were offered to him by the devotees. In fact, the first share was always theirs. And, over and above this, he was ever eager to let them shine as much as himself.

Swarg Ashram Sadhu Sangha

While Swamiji lived in Swarg Ashram, he voluntarily subjected himself to every kind of physical discomfort, for the sake of Self-realisation. All sadhus (monks) are not made that way. There were those who, like Swamiji, were unaccustomed to an austere life, but who, unlike him, were unwilling to face the hardships.

Close contact with the community of renunciates had convinced Swamiji that there itself was a field of service for him. The sadhus themselves needed guidance. Many of them had no proper spiritual guidance. They had left their homes in a fit of dispassion, but had not sought a proper guru to guide them along the spiritual path. The authorities of the kshetra, too, needed advice on which of the demands of the monks ought to be accepted and which not. In short, there was scope and need for an organisation.

Swamiji came forward to undertake the service. He strove to achieve two results by doing so. The monks themselves would be pleased that their individuality was recognised and, secondly, when the sympathy of the monks had thus been secured, it would be easy in course of time to stir them into doing something more useful than spending their time within closed doors. These thoughts prompted him to found the Swarg Ashram Sadhu Sangha. He assured the monks of the sympathetic cooperation of the management in supplying their needs. Having won their confidence by his service, he enlisted the sympathy of the management. The grateful monks elected him as their president and leader. This choice was equally welcome to the management as they were sure that his recommendations would be fair and acceptable.

The Swarg Ashram Sadhu Sangha was formed on the 24th August, 1933. It was duly registered in Lucknow under the Societies Registration Act on the 25th October, 1933.

Its Aims and Objects were:

- 1. To redress the grievances of the sadhus.
- 2. To render medical aid to the sick and the pilgrims and to nurse them.
- 3. To hold religious meetings periodically to discuss philosophical problems, to exchange religious thoughts and experiences amongst the members.
- 4. To conduct evening kathas and kirtans in Swarg Ashram locally and outside also, if circumstances permit.
- 5. To hold classes on yoga amongst their own members and outsiders also.
- 6. To train sadhus in spiritual practices and to send them abroad when their course is over, to disseminate spiritual knowledge to the people at large.
- 7. To preach Hindu philosophy through lectures, books, leaflets, pamphlets and magazines.
- 8. To do all such acts as may be necessary, incidental or conducive to the spiritual good of sadhus and the dissemination of spiritual knowledge at large.
- 9. To carry on one or more objects as far as it is practicable.
- 10. To open any other branch or branches of this Sangha in other places accessible to sadhus as far as it is practicable.

The Sangha contained the seeds of the great world-wide institution — The Divine Life Society — that Swamiji was going to establish very soon.

Under the auspices of the Sangha, Swamiji conducted intensive physical and spiritual regeneration of school and college youths, by delivering lectures in ten educational institutions in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh).

THE SECOND RENUNCIATION

Many earnest spiritual aspirants had come to Swamiji seeking spiritual training. Even in 1931 he used to warn them against juvenile enthusiasm by saying: "I am only a common monk. I may not be able to help you very much. Further, I do not make disciples. I can be your sincere friend till the end of my life. I do not keep persons at my side for a long time. I give lessons for a couple of months and ask my students to meditate in some solitary places in Kashmir or Uttarkashi." In spite of all this, young aspirants did come. He himself says in his autobiography "From 1930... I also had a burning desire to serve the world. With a view to training a band of sannyasins and yogins on the right lines, I permitted some aspirants to live in the adjacent kutirs... and gave useful hints for the removal of their difficulties and obstacles in meditation. Thus more and more persons came to me; but the Swarg Ashram management could not maintain the increasing number of seekers after Truth."

The Mahant of Swarg Ashram had died suddenly and his successor was a young man who had little reverence for the sadhus. As soon as he took charge of the ashram management he began to tease them in many ways. He imposed a number of restrictions on them. Swamiji could not tolerate the 'ordinances'. He refused to obey them, saying that the sadhus had every liberty to live as they wished. All the sadhus echoed Swamiji's views. They too refused to accept the mahant's restrictions.

The mahant was arrogantly obstinate. He wanted to erase Swamiji's influence among the sadhus. How was it possible? He began to 'bribe' some of the young, healthy, sturdy sadhus with ghee, butter and milk. He gave them good clothing. Such men joined hands with the mahant and

worked against Swamiji, but many yogis were very genuine, and they were friendly and co-operative with Swamiji.

The mahant, with the help of some sturdy men, made secret arrangements to violently attack Swami Sivanandaji and his followers. The conspiracy was revealed to Swamiji by one of the mahant's assistants. Swamiji rose up to the occasion. He directly went to the mahant and cautioned him in polite but firm language. Never before had the sadhus heard the thunder of Swamiji. They whispered: "He deserves the name Sivananda — the Rudra-spirit (the fierce aspect of Siva) is so much in him!" The mahant promised to govern the ashram properly and regretted his previous actions.



Swamiji could be stern

Swamiji did wonderful service through the Sangha. When the mahant refused to give bhiksha to the monks, Swamiji had to make numerous arrangements to feed nearly a hundred monks and support them for days on end in the lonely forests. Swamiji was truly an abode of courage and was absolutely fearless. The mahant, realising his powerlessness and foolishness, came to Swamiji and begged for pardon. As usual Swamiji blessed the man who cursed him.

On another occasion the same mahant had injured his leg. He hesitated to go to Swamiji for fear that he would not attend him. But Swamiji gave him special treatment and cured his leg in a few days, much to his surprise.

Once Swamiji had to attend a Kirtan Conference in Meerut, and in his absence the mahant again troubled the monks residing there. The ill-treated monks sought the help of the police, but in vain. They then informed Swamiji of the matter. Swamiji returned from Meerut and heard all the particulars of the situation. He reacted in the typical jivan-mukta way — without in the least losing the balance of his mind — taking everything calmly and cheerfully. Just before returning to Rishikesh he had written to Paramanandaji as follows: "11th January 1934. Rely on Him. Pray. Out of evil cometh good. 'Thy will be done'. Om Shanti Shanti Shanti. May God bless you all with strength and peace."

When he reached Swarg Ashram Swamiji was faced with two alternatives, either to give up Swarg Ashram or give up the disciples. Swamiji chose the former. He said: "It is not advisable to resist evil. Every now and then the mahant will give trouble and there will be no peace at all." He thereupon advised all the monks to leave the place, but many sadhus hesitated. Even though he had performed austerities there for ten long years, Swamiji had no attachment for the place. He declared, "Wherever I go it is Swarg Ashram for me. Even if I go to Meerut, Lahore, Lucknow, etc., I find only Swarg Ashram there." So saying, Swamiji crossed the Ganges and settled on the other shore.

When the mahant learnt about this he offered Swamiji many things to stay back, but in vain. Later on, Swamiji revealed, "I loved the place and enjoyed peace, but in the interests of the spiritual upliftment of a large number of educated seekers, I decided to leave Swarg Ashram."

Thus on the 17th January 1934, when Swamiji returned from his tour, he went over to the Ram Ashram (adjacent to the present Sivananda Ashram), along with four disciples — Paramananda, Krishnananda Puri, Yogi Narayan and Swarna Giri. He occupied the room to the east

of the library in the main building itself.

Once again, bhiksha had to be got from the Kalikambliwala Kshetra at Rishikesh, two miles away. The road to Rishikesh was not what it is now, and for nearly two months crossing the storm-water stream of Chandrabhaga was a risk to life. All this had to be undergone all over again for the sake of the Lord's mission.

The First Step — Sivanandashram

Years later, during Swamiji's birthday celebrations, it was almost a fashion for the holy men of Rishikesh and devotees of Swamiji who had come into contact with him before he had left Swarg Ashram, to exclaim, when referring to Sivanandashram, that that which had been a jungle but a few years ago had been converted into a colony of saints, a small township in which the devotees could take refuge and commune with the Lord. This was the fruit of Swamiji's second renunciation. On leaving Swarg Ashram he had not only renounced a life of comparative ease, but also a life which afforded him the greatest scope for enjoying the bliss of samadhi, undisturbed by institutions and responsibilities. He had to renounce the previous ideology that he would not own an ashram and would not allow disciples to stay with him.

He was ready, willing and eager to serve humanity; but his favourite method in Swarg Ashram was the 'lightning' method. He would take some place or province by storm and immediately rush back to Rishikesh; but even this had to be given up in favour of a life of continuous work, responsibilities and management. That was the Lord's will and Swamiji gladly submitted to it, saying: "I never dreamt that He would ordain matters thus. I left my all, cutting off ties finally, with a hazy idea of spending all my life in a quiet spot, absorbed in repeating the sweet name of Rama. But now God has given me a 'family' which so dotes upon me that, whether I want it or not, it will have me for itself. Who knows? Perhaps I am born for it. As long as anyone continues to derive one iota of benefit from this self, I am happy to be entirely theirs. I give myself over to whosoever claims me."

Years later, when discussing the move with his disciples, Swamiji said: "Planning and scheming were not in my nature. I depended upon the grace of the Lord. I had decided to leave Swarg Ashram. Where was I to go? That was a great problem. For some days I stayed in a small room at the Ram Ashram Library. A few of my students lived in a small dharamsala (resthouse for pilgrims) nearby, and depended on the kshetra for their meals. For some days I too went to the kshetra for my food. To

save time, later I received my food through an elderly monk from the kshetra." Thus months passed.

Swamiji was in search of some accommodation where they could all live and work. All the inconveniences they had to endure were incapable of compelling them to leave the locality and go to Rishikesh town. Swamiji found a kutir of four rooms, dilapidated and disused, which looked like an abandoned cow-shed. To him it was more than a palace. He cleaned it thoroughly and occupied it. On the 28th March, 1934, he wrote: "Now I have occupied the small kutir with the four rooms. Sri Swami Advaitanandaji will stay with me."

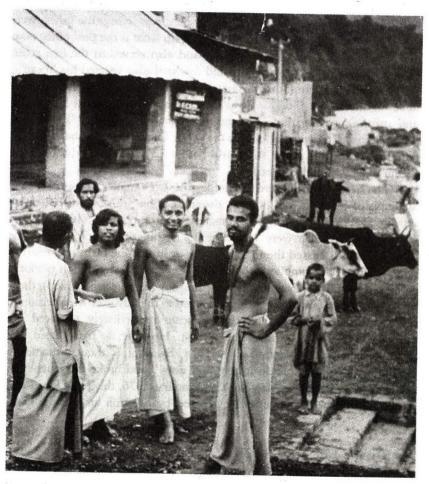
This was the nucleus of the great institution. One room he used as his kutir, office, living room, etc., another was used as a dispensary and the other two, as also the room on the hillock, were used by the disciples. Then the increasing number of disciples who came undaunted by the forbidding conditions of living, necessitated expansion. Construction meant money. Swamiji was unwilling to spend anything even on food; spending on building was out of the question: "I could have easily set up some thatched cottages in the jungle, but that was not suitable for dynamic work. Books and papers might get damaged by white-ants. I saw a row of rooms in a rest-house for pilgrims used by a shop keeper as a cow-shed. These rooms had no doors. Gradually one by one, all the rooms were converted into residential quarters for the students." Again, he says in his autobiography:

They were improved a bit by fixing doors and windows. I occupied the place and lived there for a period of 8 years.

When devotees gave me some money for my personal use, I utilised it in printing leaflets like Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions, Way to Peace and Bliss, Forty Golden Precepts and other pamphlets, and gave them to visitors. I purchased some useful medicines for treatment of sick mahatmas and for postage to send articles to newspapers and letters to keen aspirants. The work grew at a steady pace. I did not go out in search of students.

True seekers of Truth came to me in large numbers seeking my help and guidance. They all received initiation from me and lived in the adjacent rooms of the dharamsala, and worked day and night. To meet the heavy rush of work I got a duplicator and typewriter. People evinced great interest in the divine service done for the spiritual upliftment of the world. I admired their devotion to me. In work they forgot the past and plunged themselves in at-

taining spiritual evolution through service and sadhana. Devotees gave me voluntary contributions for the noble cause. For the maintenance of the students I received dry rations for five persons from the Kalikambliwala Kshetra at Rishikesh. For the rest of the students and the visitors I utilised the meagre donations received from a few admirers. That enabled me to publish some books also, for sale.



A general view of the early buildings. The steps on the right lead to Swamiji's kutir.

Swamiji lost no time in applying to the Maharajah of Tehri Garhwal for the grant of some land for constructing an ashram. The farsighted ruler of the state quickly granted the land, and also an old disused hut nearby (just where the Mt. Kailas Kutirs stand now). This was a boon to Swamiji's disciples, who used the kutirs for their living and working as well.

In the meantime they found some more vacant rooms, but uninhabitable and filthy. They were what later became the kitchen and adjacent rooms. In one room an old cowherd was living; the others were full of hay and dung. Swamiji first cleaned up what is the post office now, and occupied it. It housed a student, and also served as the first small kitchen. In about a year or so the old cowherd also vacated his 'room'.

Swamiji had found that through an organisation great good could be done for humanity. The aim was dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of spiritual aspirants in yoga and vedanta. The Swarg Ashram Sadhu Sangha had shown the way. (The Sadhu Sangha idea itself found its fulfilment in the All World Sadhus' Federation and the Bharat Sadhu Samaj, founded later.)

The best way to achieve this noble aim was a matter that engaged the attention of Swamiji and his first disciples. The decision was taken up quickly and executed with his characteristic promptness. Whilst Swamiji and Swarupanandaji were returning to Rishikesh from a tour of the Punjab, they discussed the matter on the train. As the train was nearing Ambala they had come to a conclusion. On the railway station platform several of Swamiji's disciples were waiting for his darshan. Among them was an advocate. Swamiji quickly conveyed to the advocate the decision to establish an institution, and the advocate immediately tendered the advice that Swamiji could create a trust. However, a Trust Deed was necessary for the registration of the trust. Swamiji, without a moment's hesitation, said: "Let us do it here and now", and broke the journey at Ambala. The very same day, the 13th January, 1936, the Trust Deed was drawn up by the advocate and registered by Swamiji at Ambala Cantonment.

The Divine Life Trust Society

The Aims and Objects stated in the Trust Deed, were as follows:

1. To disseminate spiritual knowledge:

(a) by publication of books, pamphlets and magazines dealing with ancient and oriental Hindu philosophy, religion and medicine in

the modern scientific manner, and their distribution on such terms as may appear expedient to the Board of Trustees.

- (b) by propagating Hari nam (the name of the Lord) and by holding and arranging religious discourses and conferences and frequent Hari nam sankirtans.
- (c) by establishing centres or societies for yogic training and moral and spiritual sadhanas to enable practicants to achieve spiritual regeneration through puja (worship), bhakti, jnana, karma and hatha yoga with systematic training in asanas, pranayama, dharana, dhyana, samadhi, etc.
- (d) and by doing all such acts and things as may be necessary and conducive to the spiritual upliftment of mankind in general and to the attainment of the above-mentioned objects in Bharatavarsha (India) in particular.
- 2. To establish and run schools, colleges and other institutions on modern lines and right basic principles and help deserving students by granting refundable or non-refundable scholarships for doing research in the various branches of Hindu shastras.
- 3. To help deserving widows, orphans or other destitute people by rendering them such assistance as the Society may deem proper to render, whether in any individual case or in any particular class of cases.
- 4. To establish and run medical dispensaries or any other medical institutions for free treatment of diseases and dispensing of medicines to the poor in particular, and to the other public in general, or on such terms as may be deemed expedient by the Board of Trustees.

These Aims and Objects were re-interpreted by the Board of Trustees by a resolution at their meeting on the 15th December, 1957, to give effect 'to the vastly expanded de facto activities of the D.L.S. Trust': and therefore, resolved that in clause 1 (a) the words 'and other contemporary' be inserted between the word 'Hindu' and the word 'philosophy' so that the phrase may read 'Hindu and other contemporary philosophy'. Similarly in the case of clause (2) the phrase 'Hindu shastras' was amended to 'Hindu and other contemporary shastras'.

The Divine Life Society

The Trust membership was limited. Many were the seekers after Truth who wanted to associate themselves with the glorious mission.

Hence Swamiji founded 'The Divine Life Society', with four sections: 'The Vedantic Society', 'The Divine Prem Society', 'The Yogic Society' and 'The League of Brahmacharis'. "There is no fee for membership," says the First Annual Report of the D.L.S. "Anyone who is eager to have Self-realisation, who practises ahimsa, satyam and brahmacharya can become a member... Branches of these societies have already been formed in different places."

The Divine Life Society was duly registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, at Lahore, on the 16th April, 1939. One of the first concerns of the institution was to find ways and means of disseminating spiritual knowledge. Therefore in January 1938 the Trustees resolved to open a Permanent Fund (Capital Account) for this purpose. Devotees could donate Rs. 25 to this fund. This amount was invested in a bank and out of the interest a leaflet was printed periodically for free distribution. These pamphlets and leaflets were sent to anyone who sent stamps for postage. Often Swamiji would send them unasked for, to anyone who wrote to him.

Just before the Divine Life Society was actually registered at Lahore, the First Punjab Provincial D.L. Societies' Conference was held there on April 8th, 9th and 10th. It has therefore a distinct place in the history of the inception of the Society. Moreover, this Conference was attended by Swamiji himself. It passed several significant resolutions which may be said to form the basic principles that Swamiji felt ought to govern the great institution.

The Conference was held in the Moolchand Temple, Naulakha, Lahore. Swamiji, who had on one or two previous occasions declined to move out of Ananda Kutir, surprised the organisers by arriving at Lahore on the 7th. The programme of the Conference followed the model of the Sadhana Week programme at Ananda Kutir. What is significant here is the budget of resolutions passed at the Conference, at the instance of Swami himself. Here they are:

- 1. That members of the Divine Life Societies, in particular, and all the sankirtan-loving aspirants and devotees in general, must make it a point to write at least one mala (108) of their guru mantra in a mantra notebook every day. In case they fail to do so, they must make up the deficiency the next day without fail.
- 2. That every member of the Society must make it a point to keep up the Spiritual Diary regularly.
- 3. That every member of the Society must make it a point to

strictly follow the rules No. 1,3,7,9,12,14,15,17 and 19 laid down in the Twenty Spiritual Instructions without fail.

- 4. That every member of the Society must make it a point not to smoke, not to 'drink' and not to eat meat, at all costs.
- 5. That every member of the Society must make it a point to do at least one mala of mantra japa, as penance, whenever he fails to do his duty as far as his pledge to the observance of truth and non-violence and treading the path to God-realisation is concerned.
- 6. That every member of the Society must make it a point not to go to cinemas, talkies, etc., and abstain from 'fashion' at all costs.
- 7. That every member of the Society must try to serve the country and use as far as practicable country-made cloth and country-made goods only.
- 8. That every member of the Society all over India must make it a point to use Hindi only, as far as nationality is concerned.
- 9. That every branch centre of the Society must try to conduct daily morning class in brahma-muhurta as put forth in the 'Routine for Branches'.

It is clear from the above that the sole aim with which Swamiji established the Divine Life Society was to lead everybody along the path of Divine Life, the path to God-realisation. He never minced words. He clearly stated the duties of the members and gave them cent-per-cent practical instructions to guide them to the goal. He demonstrated clearly that his was an institution that had no axe to grind but that it shared his burning desire to see that everybody benefited by his teachings and that everybody might be freed from the misery of birth and death.

The Ashram Grows

Earnest seekers after Truth who had accepted Swamiji as their guru and who regularly visited Rishikesh for his darshan volunteered to build some kutirs on the land granted by the Tehri Maharajah. First and foremost among them was Sri Hari Ganesh Ambekar (Sri Swami Hariomanandaji Maharaj). Then another devotee came forward with a donation, and with these the construction of the 'Yoga Sadhana Kutirs' was undertaken by Swamiji.

This idea appealed to many others. They, too, came forward to build kutirs expressly for their own stay whenever they visited the ashram. But there was this advantage; that when they left, the kutirs could be utilised by Swamiji's sannyasin-disciples. Hence almost all the kutirs in the

Sivananda Ashram were built by some devotees or other, mostly for his or her own use, the ashramites using the kutir in the absence of the donor.

When Swamiji noticed that the idea of building kutirs on the bank of the Ganges appealed to all, he began to encourage it. A notification published in the Society's magazine *The Divine Life* calls the ashram "An ideal place for meditation with picturesque scenery and a view of the Ganges," and says, "Some isolated kutirs, a lecture hall, a dhyana mandir (shrine for meditation) with sankirtan bhavan will gradually be constructed in the near future. This is an ideal place with perfect solitude and quietude for the practice of divine contemplation. Those who want to practise meditation at Ananda Kutir are welcome to build their kutirs here."

The response was very good: quite a number of aspirants, particularly those who were to retire from active service, eagerly came forward to have kutirs built at the ashram. The question of retired people settling at the ashram gave rise to the necessity of accommodation suitable for those who might like to lead the life of a vanaprastha (one who leads the third stage of life) for some time.

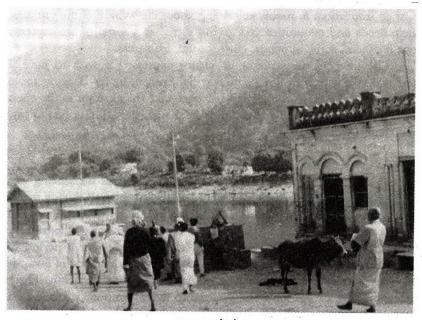
Swamiji at once took up this idea and the result was the following announcement in *The Divine Life* magazine of April, 1942: "For the accommodation of retired people who come to Rishikesh for rigorous sadhana, a plot of land is reserved at Ananda Kutir for the construction of kutirs. These will be constructed with a room for silent meditation and rooms for kitchen, bath and other conveniences. The first kutir is under construction."

At the same time the Bhajan Hall was taking shape. It was completed in 1942. All important functions, particularly the Sadhana Weeks, were conducted here.

It is said that even during Swamiji's stay at Brahmananda Ashram he used to frequent the place where the Vishwanath Mandir now stands and, noticing the abundance of bael trees (sacred for the worship of Lord Siva) he ardently wished that there should be a Siva temple there. He would mentally offer all the bael leaves to the Siva enshrined in that imaginary temple. Therefore, building of a Siva temple was taken up as soon as the Bhajan Hall had been completed. Mizar Govinda Pai gave the beautiful idol of Lord Murali Manohar (Krishna), and Sri H.M. Mehta of Bombay sent the idols of Lord Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman. Swamiji's wish had materialised in the form of the imposing Vishwanath Mandir. The opening ceremony was performed on the 31st December, 1943.



Swamiji outside the temple



A general view

At about the same time Swamiji moved to the kutir on the bank of the Ganges. The ashram had grown, too. The number of inmates was steadily increasing.

The previous kitchen was transferred to a bigger room in the same block; and that room was given over to Swamiji to be used as an office. The almirahs contained his books; there were a few typists in front of him, ready to type his precious writings and letters. The secretary worked in the next room. When the post office came, it was accommodated in the last room in the same block.

It was wonderful to see Swamiji sitting on a small sofa, with a small table in front of him, absorbed in a letter from a seeker after Truth, and to see him walking briskly with a few letters to hand them over to the postmaster himself. Even in Malaya he himself insisted on posting every one of his letters. As he dropped them in the post box he felt that he had handed it over to the addressee. (Later, that was the feeling with which he looked over every packet of books and then placed them on the table.)

It was a grand and glorious sight to see him sitting on one of the cement benches flanking the kitchen verandah, discussing problems of world interest with his secretary and other inmates of the ashram, to see him go from room to room, enquiring about the welfare of the inmates, their needs and necessities and giving them, as a token of his supreme love for them, some almonds, curd, butter, fruits, etc.

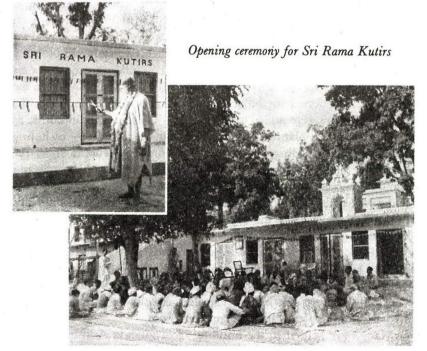
The moment an aspirant or visitor expressed a wish to have a personal talk with him for spiritual enlightenment or for clearing some doubts in sadhana, Swamiji would at once take the aspirant to the open terrace over his old kutir and patiently hear what the aspirant had to say, and clear his doubts.

Before 1941, the ashram satsang (congregational prayer) used to be held on the verandah of the Rama Ashram. After Swamiji occupied the present kutir and the Bhajan Hall was built, in summer the satsang was held on the verandah (which also served as the dining hall during mealtimes). In winter it was held in the Bhajan Hall. Swamiji was always the first to arrive and the last to leave. The evening satsang was extremely solemn, except when there were many visitors; and, after a period of study of scriptures (Gita, Upanishads, some Puranas and one of Swamiji's own books), the entire gathering would meditate or sing kirtan. There were no lights, except for a small oil lamp at the temporary altar, and a hurricane lantern used only during the study-period. Swamiji's radiant countenance as he emerged from his room to take part in the satsang, and as he re-entered it afterwards, was an object for meditation. Equally so

was the great figure clad in an overcoat and turban, with a lantern in one hand and the inevitable bags in the other, walking majestically along the road towards the Bhajan Hall in winter. There was inexpressible grace in the long arms swinging rhythmically with each step.

The Bhajan Hall served Swamiji not only for the purpose of conducting his satsang and prayers, but also as a sportsfield, for soon after the morning class and after having attended the puja in the temple, he would run around in the Bhajan Hall for his morning exercise.

The Diamond Jubilee year (1947) saw a number of additions to the ashram. The Diamond Jubilee Hall was built to house the office which had by then grown enormously and, for want of accommodation, had been scattered all over the ashram. Swamiji's office was also in the new hall. The post office was moved to where it is at present. During the Diamond Jubilee year in 1947 the Vishwanath Ghat was constructed on the bank of the Ganges, and a block of three more kutirs was added to the ashram. It would not be incorrect to say that this year in particular introduced a period of intense activity and unlimited expansion. Swamiji's glory had spread to the four corners of the globe, and people came forward to carry out his wishes with great joy.



The All-India Tour in 1950 resulted in a continuous stream of visitors flowing into the ashram: more and more kutirs were needed. Rooms in the neighbourhood had to be rented. The ashram had grown into a nagar (township) — Sivananda Nagar.

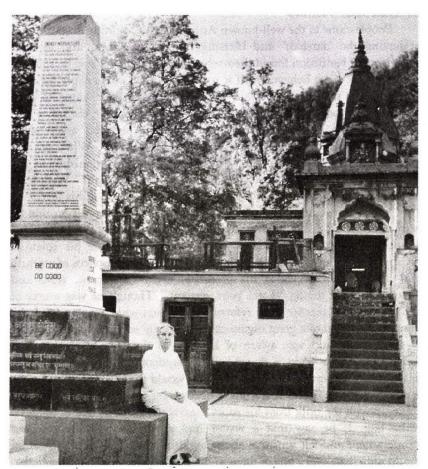
(A miracle brought into existence the 'Gyaneshwari Kutir', near the temple. In 1948 Swamiji and a party of devotees went to the residence of Yogiraj Sri Gauri Prasadji, a retired judge, in Swarg Ashram, and conducted sankirtan there. Soon afterwards the departed soul of the yogi's grand-daughter expressed to him the desire that she wished to 'live close to Swamiji'. In deference to her wish he immediately donated the kutir.)

Supreme guru-bhakti (devotion to the guru) of Swamiji's disciples took the shape of the beautiful marble temple known as Sivananda Mandir (wherein is enshrined the marble statue of Swamiji) and the grand Sivananda Pillar on which are inscribed his life-transforming teachings.

Whilst all this was taking place a two-storeyed building was being constructed which was to house the professors of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy as well as some of the students — especially foreign students. This building was completed in 1954, and the opening ceremony was performed on the 26th June, 1954. Even the construction work going on throughout the year could not keep pace with the donations received for the construction of kutirs. Thereafter another two-storeyed building known as 'Parvati Kutir' was built, as well as another group of rooms which were built over the old Yoga Sadhana Kutirs. And finally, when the government sanctioned the hillock adjacent to the ashram in 1958, the Mt. Kailas Kutirs were added to the ashram. These delightful kutirs, as also most of the well-planned blocks of rooms in the ashram — including the Eye Hospital building - were designed and constructed under the supervision of Sri Swami Madhavanandaji. Before him, Swami Vishnudevanandaji was in charge of construction, and the Sivananda Mandir was built in his time. Earlier Sri Swami Nityanandaji did this seva (selfless work) when the Siva Kutir and a number of other kutirs were constructed.

In 1944, the Divine Life Society acquired the 'Vishwanath Bagh' (Garden House) on the Hardwar Road at Rishikesh. Sri Swami Shraddhanandaji constructed a cave in it; and Sri Swami Shankaranandaji later on not only converted it into a vegetable and flower garden, but also remodelled all the rooms into concrete buildings.

Many have helped in the building of Sivananda Ashram, but the



The Sivananda pillar with the temple in the background

dynamic spirit behind every new construction, the inspirer and the one who, by his own unique methods would keep the flame of inspiration ever bright in the hearts of those who had the blessed good fortune to help him in this noble mission, was Swamiji himself. The ashram, therefore, reflects his personality, his dynamism and his untiring spirit of selfless service. In that sense it would be true to say that every brick of this grand structure has been laid by him. And apart from this, it is literally true in the case of the construction of the Vishwanath Mandir: Swamiji himself used to carry bricks on his head when the work was going on.

(Since 1944 the growth of the ashram has gone on apace. The total number of rooms is in excess of 200.)

Treatment of Visitors

People came to the well-known Ananda Kutir with the devout desire of having the 'darshan' and blessing of this mahatma, and to their surprise and confusion found themselves confronted by a stately, stalwart sadhu (monk) who behaved as if it was he who had come eager for their darshan. For instance, a certain lady from South India came to have Swami Sivananda's darshan. At that time Swamiji was in the office and she was shown in. After some time she came out and asked some ashramites standing there "Where is Swami Sivananda?" When she was told that it was from him she was coming, in great astonishment she gasped: "Oh! I thought he was the manager. Is he the saint?" With tears in her eyes she ran again to the manager-monk, and fell at his feet.

To see him cutting jokes with everyone gave the impression that he was a worldly man, but one who was perceptive could not but be dazzled by the exquisite lustre of his eyes which ever revealed his spiritual greatness. Yet, not withstanding the unmistakable atmosphere of serenity and dignity that pervaded his presence, every movement, word and action appeared to say, "I am your servant." Though he was a seer of great repute, a teacher and reformer of nation-wide renown and the founder and head of a great organisation, Swamiji seemed quite oblivious of these facts, and was aware of himself as the cosmic servant and worshipper. Even when a dozen willing students of his were ready to hasten to serve him at a single word, one would find at times that before a cup of milk could be ready for a tired guest, Swamiji himself would come up with the milk from his room, and some fruits as well in his little white bag. If he saw that a visitor had a naturally shy or reserved temperament and felt sensitive about making known his needs, Swamiji would anticipate every one of them and an ashramite would be directed to attend to all his wants even before he asked for anything.

When he went for his evening walk Swamiji was always in the habit of carrying with him some fruit, some little tit-bit or perhaps an interesting book which he would take to the room of anyone to whom he could give it. Whilst on his way to his room at midday, happening to see some sadhu being served with bhiksha by an ashramite, at times Swamiji would stop there to drive away the monkeys and pour water for the sadhu to wash his hands. On such occasions remonstrances were of no avail. If his devotees had presented fruits and sweets to him as an offering, Swamiji would at once start giving them to every soul in sight. If the servant boys, the barber, the postman, a passing beggar or scavenger happened to be on the spot, they all got their share.

On the eve of periodical functions in particular, when feeding on a large scale was to take place, before the hired cook had begun to prepare the special sweet dish Swamiji's childlike impatience would overcome him. Quickly offering a little to the Ganges he would heap up all that was ready and hasten to distribute it. He did not give with one hand, but would scoop with both hands from the plate and pour it into everyone's hands. At times he forgot to distinguish between adults and infants in his fervour to give. Several times one would witness the comic terror of a suddenly wide-eyed child confronted by the extended palms of Swamiji, heaped with a quantity of sweets such as would hardly be possible for it even to hold, let alone carry.

He amazed the orthodox type of sannyasins by his manner of service to his devotees. A guest would feel that he was monopolising the entire time and attention of Swamiji and that the latter was bestowing the most exceptional care upon his comforts. The visitor would find that no sooner was a room allotted to him than he was besieged by a dozen kind enquiries as to his needs. Water would be placed in his room, a lantern provided immediately, a mosquito net if it was summer or an extra blanket or two if the season was cold, an easy chair if he happened to be old or an invalid. Then Swamiji would finally ask the librarian to issue any book that he desired to study.

Observing this extreme and meticulous manner of Swamiji's care and attendance proved a revelation to many visitors who said frankly, "We are really put to shame by Swamiji. He teaches us householders the true method of treating and serving guests. Swamiji has perfected the art of hospitality and we feel that we must learn many points from him. We thought that as householders there was little that we did not already know about entertainment, but here is one who is a model to be copied, even by us."

The manner of treatment of visitors and guests at this remote ashram was truly an eye-opener. The ashramites as well as anyone connected with them could well be proud of it. Swamiji was like a watchdog in this respect. His instruction to his beloved workers was never to be overbearing to any visitors. He would constantly say: "If you try to view everything as Atman you must express it in all your actions. It's no good to have your head in the clouds while you keep your palms clenched in your pockets. It does not matter whether they derive any extraordinary spiritual gain or not, but people staying here for some time must at least enjoy real peace. Later, whenever they remember the love and kindness they received here they will also be reminded of the peace of the Ganges,

the kirtans and other spiritual ideas associated with the place. Serve them, therefore, with bhava (feeling). Ashrams and maths must serve as examples to show what selfless service and disinterested love mean."

By this loving attention and kindness Swamiji achieved his object of awakening each one in a manner suited to his capacities. Together with hospitality and service he managed, within the short period of their stay, to transform the ideas, opinions and conduct of people. He did this in a manner peculiarly his own, making them pick up some kirtan, learn a few asanas, do simple pranayama and lecture a couple of times before a small audience. He acquainted them with the practice of likhit japa (mantra writing) and taught them the method of maintaining a spiritual diary and how to draw up a rational daily routine. Visitors also got to know how to conduct meditation, prayer and study classes. In brief, by the time they departed each one virtually constituted a potential nucleus for the further propagation of divine ideas and spiritual practices. Within a short period of a week or ten days the visiting aspirant or devotee managed to learn many a thing in a concise but clear manner.

Swamiji said: "One has to follow the policy of 'short and sweet' in the world of today. The traditional piety is conspicuous by its absence and the people have very little time to spare nowadays. Everything has to be made to suit the nature of the occasion. Life is short and days and years pass away. So when people are with me I quickly give them whatever I have to give, according to their need and particular temperament."

Swamiji's concern did not end with the ashram visitors but embraced some less welcome 'guests'. He would not even allow others to harm any being on earth. Once an ashramite had taken out the cot in which Swamiji used to sleep, and discovered that it was an abode of bugs. 'Guru-bhakti' (devotion to the preceptor) surged in his heart and he wanted to exterminate the little creatures that disturbed Swamiji's sleep. He prepared a big swab and dipped it in kerosene oil and began to apply it to all the hideouts of the bugs. The bugs were lucky (and why not, they had enjoyed Swamiji's holy company every night!). Swamiji appeared on the scene. A look of intense pain on his face halted the disciple's destructive process. "Ohji, please don't do this," he said.

"But Swamiji, this cot is full of bugs and that is why Swamiji is unable to sleep," replied the disciple.

"It does not matter. Take the cot and leave it in the jungle for a few days; and in the meantime give me another cot," came Swamiji's quick answer.

Similar was the protection that the rats that had taken refuge in

Swamiji's dwelling got from him. A few of them began to eat away the papers and to destroy the bedding and clothes. The disciples working there caught them and all that they could do was to give the rats a joy-ride in a cosy gunny-bag; but the rats invariably returned to the place that very evening. They even began to appeal to Swamiji's mercy by nibbling his toes at night. For a diabetic this could be dangerous. An expert arrived at the ashram and he gave his expert advice on the elimination of the rat-nuisance. Of course, he had no solution simpler than poisoning the rats. Swamiji who always listened sympathetically to every kind of topic — pleasant or unpleasant, sacred or secular — for the first time refused to listen. "No, no." He vigorously shook his head. "The rats should not be killed. On the contrary we should take care of the things that we wish the rats should not destroy. Manuscripts should remain in steel cabinets; bedding and clothes, too should be well protected against rats. They should never be killed!"

If the expert said anything more he would have earned regular food for the rats, as others had done who pleaded that the monkeys living in the ashram neighbourhood should be driven away. Swamiji quickly countered this suggestion by sanctioning a regular supply of gram for the monkeys!

In 1949 sometimes the evening satsang used to be held in Swamiji's kutir. After the satsang was over Purushottamji used to spread Swamiji's bedding. One day when he opened the almirah to take a bed sheet, he found one new and costly sheet completely torn into pieces by a rat, and inside it were its four new-born babies. They had hardly opened their eyes. Purushottamji took the sheet along with the little rats to show them to Swamiji. When Swamiji saw the tiny creatures his heart was filled with compassion and he felt greatly pained for having disturbed them from their place. He asked Purushottamji to put them back immediately in their original place in the same condition, lest their mother should miss them. In a day or two, however, the mother rat met her death at the hands of a cat. Soon afterwards the little rats also unfortunately died. When Swamiji saw the dead rats an expression of pain came into his eyes. He did maha mantra kirtan for the peace of the departed souls of the rats.

During the summer season scorpions are plentiful. On the verandah of Swamiji's kutir, where the evening satsangs were previously held, a pair of tongs were kept for picking up the scorpions and throwing them away. One night a visitor saw a scorpion during kirtan time. He crushed it to death with his torch-light. Swamiji happened to see the incident, and immediately after the kirtan he called the visitor and asked him why he

killed the scorpion. The man replied: "It is a cruel creature and stings people." Swamiji retorted: "By killing one scorpion are you able to save people from the stings of scorpions of which there are millions in the country? To kill the creature it probably took you only a few seconds. But can you give its life back again? When you have no strength to give life back to the dead how could you take life?" The visitor was taken aback, prostrated before Swamiji and said that he was sorry for the incident and that he would never kill a creature in his life again.

Training in Self-Reliance

Swamiji trained his early disciples with great care and thoroughness and instilled into them the missionary spirit of service.

He always emphasised that they had been trained to face all eventualities. For instance, when the possibility of some litigation involved in the publication work was being discussed, he wrote in a letter dated 2nd July, 1935: "One should have every kind of experience. Then only fear and feeling of shame will disappear."

Almost the same words were uttered by him in 1955 when the ashram authorities were hesitating to file a complaint against the absconding inmate who had been the ashram postmaster: "If that is the right thing to do, then do it! I am not afraid to go to court. We should welcome dishonour as well as honour."

Swamiji's disciples had to face a severe test in 1941. It was perhaps designed by Swamiji to test the devotion of the disciples to himself and to his cause, and to train them for all eventualities. On the 18th February, 1941, Swamiji left the ashram without the knowledge of anyone. He left a note which said: "I have nominated Swami Paramananda, my senior disciple, as the president of the Divine Life Society... as he is in close contact with me for several years... I have to retire immediately for reason of my poor health."

The disciples started searching for their master, each in a different direction, while those who had specific duties stuck to their posts. They were put through the 'fire test' and proved worthy of the confidence that Swamiji had placed in them. They had matchless devotion for him, and were ready and eager to carry out his behests. They would carry on the mission without his personal stimulus, and worked as a team. This was what Swamiji wanted.

In a supplement to the March 1941 Divine Life magazine, Sri Swami Paramanandaji wrote:



His holiness Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj. Born in 1887. Served as a doctor for ten years in Singapore. Returned to India and entered the order of Sri Sankara in 1923. Settled down in Rishikesh for tapas and seclusion.

Sri Swamiji has a heart full of unlimited mercy and love. In order to serve humanity on a large scale in a systematic and organised manner, he established the Divine Life Society in 1936. He remained in a small hut on the bank of the Ganges, and for the benefit of the whole world he turned out tremendous work in various directions. He has initiated 200 sannyasins and

brahmacharins. Every word of his writings is filled with power. Thousands have been given a new life, derived fresh energy and hope, inexpressible joy and peace through the grace, mercy and blessing of Sri Swamiji.

On the unforgettable day of Tuesday the 18th February, 1941, Swamiji retired from the active field of the D.L.S. work. He has again taken to seclusion, either in the deep forests of the Himalayas, or in the plains on the banks of the holy Ganges. He left Ananda Kutir with a single cloth, without any money and without taking leave of anyone, at about 2 p.m. If anyone is fortunate to meet this magnetic personality, we request him not to disturb Swamiji in any way. But if people happen to meet him they may have his darshan and take care of his body when the opportunity arises.

Swamiji has given us definite lines to work on in the spiritual path. He has guided us for a long period, and now he wants to see how we act our part. No doubt this is a severe test, especially when all his students are so young in the spiritual path. If we make an earnest attempt to carry out his will, by his grace we are sure to come out of this difficult trial successfully. Sri 'Swamiji Maharaj's love for us is unbounded. He will always dwell with all of us. He cannot desert us and deprive us of his darshan. He cannot injure anyone in any way. When we give satisfaction to our master, we are sure that he will again give us darshan in the near future and guide us further in the spiritual path till we reach the goal. It is his duty. He will not fail in any way to do his duty, but we must carry out his instructions to the very letter.

Special prayers will be conducted in all places, by the members of the Divine Life Society and the disciples of Sri Swamiji and inmates of Ananda Kutir, for his good health and early return. At all Birthday Celebrations on the 8th September of every year we hope Sri Swamiji Maharaj will give darshan and bless all his devotees.

This announcement is dated 21st February.

This 'Supplement' also carried an 'Open Letter' to Swamiji signed by 'Admirers, sannyasins, brahmacharins, disciples and members of the Divine Life Society.' A few interesting extracts taken from it are given below:

The last letter from thy holy hand is a boon to the whole world

because it contains your definite instructions for us to follow. We assure you that we will carry out all your instructions to the very letter. Thy will is strong and powerful. Thy grace and blessings will work wonders. We have strong faith in thy lotus feet... You have guided us all... Every moment of your life had something for us to learn... The wealth of the whole world is at thy feet. How very happy the world will feel, if we had made suitable arrangements for thy comfortable stay in seclusion!... The condition of the inmates of Ananda Kutir is now pitiable. Some have given up taking meals, some have stopped sleeping, some are wandering around in wild jungles like mad-men, in anxious expectation of thy darshan. A word from the master by way of a letter will bring peace and joy to millions.

Then follows a progress report on the item dearest to Swamiji's heart:

Now the Gita: Part VI, Inspiring Songs, Philosophy of OM, Mandukya Upanishad, and Inspiring Messages for All, are all ready and the first copies wait at Ananda Kutir for thy blessings before release. We are certain to get help from all quarters for the quick publication of all your latest writings, and one by one all will be printed.

Blessed is the movie camera that was purchased from the donations given by your devotees for the 54th Birthday celebrations. Due to our ignorance and foolishness, we did not use the camera well. We have taken only 300 feet of your daily activities at Ananda Kutir. Whenever we yearn for thy darshan, at least we will have thy darshan through the films on the screen. For the sake of future generations, kindly have mercy and give us darshan — we will record some more of thy actions.

On the day Swamiji left he went to the post office in the morning and asked for two rupees. He had only a dhoti (a piece of cotton cloth which men in India wrap around their waists) and an upper cloth with him; he played with the two rupees for a short while like a young child. It was the custom in those days that no one would disturb Swamiji when he rested in his kutir in the afternoons, and it was during this period that he slipped out of the ashram. On the way near the Rishikesh toll gate Sri Swami Abhayanandaji and some other mahatmas met him and greeted him: but he would not be drawn into conversation. Perhaps he was observing the

vow of silence. He passed through Hardwar where he spent a night on a public platform, and then continued his journey via Jwalapur, walking along the canal side. Near Kankhal in the village called Jagdispur he took rest under a tree. His wonderful personality attracted the attention of the villagers, one of whom served him. This man had a sugar-cane farm, and he served Swamiji with food and sugar-cane juice. He was so moved by Swamiji that, thinking that he must be a great mahatma, served him with devotion and faith.

In the meantime, everyone at Rishikesh, Hardwar and throughout the entire district knew that Swamiji was missing. One of the swamis who had gone in search of him found him at the home of the sugar-cane farmer and begged, "Please come back to the ashram." It was only then that the farmer realised that he had been host to a very great sage. (This man became a great devotee of Swamiji and every year used to bring two big drums of sugar-cane juice in commemoration of the wonderful event!)

Accompanied by the disciple who had found him, Swamiji returned to the ashram in a car on the 24th February, at 10 a.m. On his return he wrote the following letter to Swami Paramanandaji, who by that time was at Lahore: "Your mighty will, plus that of others, has again dragged me. You will have to manage everything. I will be in name only. Mysterious are the ways of Lord Siva. May his blessings be upon you and all... We must always be prepared for anything and everything. Be cheerful and bold."

The mission did not rest with the building up of a powerful central organisation, but needed independent, capable, well-trained saintly disciples of the sage who would be willing to work anywhere to further the noble cause. Their capacities had been tested, and their willingness to work. Would they sacrifice his close proximity, and even if they had to leave in unpleasant circumstances, would they continue the noble mission?

That test came in 1942. Paramanandaji had been asked to leave the ashram. When he left on the 3rd October 1942, Swamiji gave him a general letter of introduction: "Swami Paramananda is my disciple. He lived with me for a period of ten years. He considerably overworked himself during these years and so is taking rest." This paved the way for the wider expansion of the Divine Life Mission.

Wherever he went, Paramanandaji spread the glory and the gospel of Swamiji. He also had several of Swamiji's books translated and published in Urdu and paved the way for a later establishment of a dynamic Divine Life Centre in Madras. This example was followed by many other sannyasin disciples of Swamiji, who went to different centres and established ashrams and institutions both in India and later abroad, for the furtherance of Swamiji's mission. (Paramanandaji also visited several branches of the Divine Life Society, and galvanised them. He won the appreciation of the public and also of Swamiji, who wrote on the 31st October, 1951: "I am receiving several letters from the branches you visited, where you exhibited the film. Countless appreciations. No one has done such work. It is unprecedented.")

The question of finance did not worry Swamiji. He knew that once the workers were looked after, their enthusiasm kept up and their spirit of service preserved, the work would be done efficiently, and public support in the form of donations would be forthcoming in abundance. "Money or no money," he said on the 2nd October, 1949, "you must take care of the body. If you are not looking after this instrument of the Lord, then you are not worshipping God properly. The best worship of God is to maintain this body in proper condition, to enable it to work out His will in the best manner possible."

One of Swamiji's most amazing characteristics was his supreme optimism. When there were only twelve inmates in the ashram and they used to take their meals inside the kitchen room itself, he would often come in and, with an indescribable light in his lustrous eyes, say: "A time will come when our diner's line will extend from Rishikesh to Lakshmanjhula." That was not in fun. Even by 1959 if all those who took their food in the ashram's annakshetra (dining room) were seated in one row they would cover a considerable distance. The following remarks of Swamiji made on the 2nd October, 1949, echoes this spirit:

"Money will come; money must come; very soon there will be crores and crores. You won't be able to count the money! Believe me: such a time must come. You can best help that if you all work hard."

For two months during the All-India Tour in 1950 so much money poured into the Tourist Car and thence to the ashram, that it was difficult for two swamis to count it! His words never proved false.

The above quotation should not be taken to mean that Swamiji had wealth as his goal. No. His attitude is best explained in his own words:

I never thought of starting an ashram. When the great rush of students and devotees came to me for spiritual guidance, with a view to render help to them and to make them useful to the world, I created some fields of activity for their evolution and for the

public good. I encouraged them much in their studies and their sadhana, and I arranged the necessary comforts and conveniences for their boarding and lodging, using the donations I received for my personal use from some admirers. Thus in course of time I found around me a huge ashram and an ideal institution with a congenial environment.

I did not work with big plans or schemes. I did not approach any great person or maharajah for getting money. The world appreciated the service done here on the right lines. A little help came from the divine source and I carefully utilised every cent of it for bringing maximum spiritual good to the world. Several new palatial buildings crop up every year and yet there is lack of accommodation for the inmates and the stream of visitors. At every stage, there was splendid development of work. On many occasions devotees pressed me to undertake propaganda tours for collecting money. That was impossible for me. I take delight in giving and serving all. In 1940 grand arrangements were made for an extensive tour in the Punjab. I cancelled the programme and sent the following telegram at once: "I do not care if the Divine Life Society flourishes or not. If it is the grace of the Lord and if we carry on our sadhana and service with the right attitude, inner feeling and faith, help is bound to come from the Divine Source. Let me do as much as possible by remaining in my own small kutir on the banks of the Ganges. When the honey is there, the bees will come by themselves. Shun ruthlessly the desire for money."

In a short period the work grew. Regular classes are now conducted on yoga, bhakti, vedanta and health. Today over 300 students live by my side with all comforts and conveniences, treading the path of yoga, and serving the world in a variety of ways.

Blueprint for the Institution

On the 18th February, 1949, Swamiji gave a discourse upon the glory of sannyasa and duties and responsibilities of the sannyasin. His own remark that one of the main advantages of life in the ashram was the protection it gave the sannyasin from the onslaughts of worldly influences, led Swamiji into the topic of the conduct of the institution itself:

No one should feel estranged in the ashram. Everyone has got so many faculties. There is capacity also to do something grand. The

will of the Lord also guides them. But the difficulty is that when a man leaves his hearth and home, his wife and children, his parents and relatives, his wealth and position, he feels that he is entitled to be independent and refuses to be bossed over. We should appreciate that, or at least recognise its existence. Each sadhaka, therefore, should personally take care that this independence does not grow into arrogance. Those who run the institution should not hurt the individual's feelings, nor make him feel that he is being looked down upon. Each department, the moment you entrust it to a particular person, should be almost independent.

There is a difficulty in this. For instance, there is the Ayurvedic Pharmacy and the Publication League, etc., where saleable items are stocked. If those who handle these things are left to themselves, maya will spread her net over them and instigate them to pilfer, thus ruining themselves and the institution. The system should be fool-proof and there should be frequent checking also.

This should not lead us into a suspicion complex. If those who are responsible for the various departments feel that they are being watched with suspicion, their interest and zeal will be lost. Just once in a while have an eye open. It is not only good for the institution, but will prevent the individual from falling a prey to evil.

Earlier in the day Swamiji had said:

Sannyasa is not an easy thing. I think that in sannyas life, too, we shall see all the lilas that characterise worldly life: fights and quarrels, jealousy and hatred, passion and greed. Many sannyasis have gone back to the household life after having embraced sannyasa. They had all taken sannyasa perhaps before they were fit for it. Some of them have again come back to a life of renunciation and thenceforward have been very good sadhus. Evil is there inside; man has got to be vigilant and to exert always to annihilate it. Every ashramite should be made to feel this is his own home. Especially those who do not belong to your caste, creed, community or group should be especially well looked after, lest they should feel, 'Because I am a Punjabi, I am neglected by these Madrasis'. They should be made to feel that they are in fact looked after better here than they would be in an ashram where their own people predominate.

And there should be a sort of tribunal to settle grievances and to listen to complaints. This should meet once in a while and iron out the differences that may crop up between man and man.

Old workers (I mean both those who are aged and those who have served the institution for a long time) should be well looked after. If a sadhak has served well for three or four years and has been very useful to us, the Society should attend to his needs till the end of his life. What little service they can render to the Society they should voluntarily do. There should be no extraction of work from them. They should be allowed to meditate and progress in their sadhana. Nowadays we are not making any arrangement for people who would like to spend their days in meditation practice. Krishnanandaji, Achyutanandaji and others like them should immediately be provided with kutirs where they can carry on their meditation in seclusion. Premanandaji should also be given a room somewhere up the hill. He has greatly overworked. He needs immediate relief and rest. Food, milk, fruits, biscuits, coffee and tea; everything that they need should automatically reach their kutirs without their asking.

But this should not bring about an effeminacy in you. Some people have an intriguing nature. They will create parties, cliques and troubles. With them you should be polite but firm. Say "Om namo Narayanaya! Swamiji Maharaj, you can leave the ashram." These vipers should not be allowed to poison the atmosphere, and create internal dissensions.

These are just some of the thoughts that occurred to me. Keep them in mind. The organisation has grown world-wide beyond our own expectations. It is better therefore that we adhere to certain principles. The whole world looks to us for guidance. It is essential that the main hub of the institution should be efficient and run on systematic lines.

I have a feeling that even if all of us disappear from the scene, the Lord's will will work itself through other instruments. But that should not lead us into complacency. We should exert our utmost to do our bit.

FORMAL TRAINING

The first Annual Report of the Divine Life Trust Society gives an interesting account of the ways in which the resident-seekers were trained by Swamiji himself:

Seven full-time aspirants who have renounced the world and who are treading the path of nivritti marga (the path of renunciation) were admitted in the year 1936. A beginner is trained in all branches of yoga under the direct guidance of Swami Sivananda. Here there is a great field for aspirants for purifying the heart through service to many sadhus and sannyasins, sick people and others. This is a wonderful field for developing mercy, cosmic love, tolerance, adaptability, Atma-bhava and various other virtues. Young people should combine service and meditation. A practical knowledge of selfless public service in all branches is an essential qualification for every aspirant. Sometimes one may have to do cooking, washing and other work also when he lives alone in seclusion. Aspirants who come to Swamiji for practising kundalini yoga and awakening the kundalini are stunned when they are posted to serve the sick and other aged people. They show wry faces in the beginning. Later on they realise the importance of service.

When the heart is purified, then by the prescribed methods the kundalini is awakened. The aspirants learn lessons and practise asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas, concentration and meditation. Sri Swamiji clears their doubts and explains the knotty

points in yoga and vedanta philosophy. He never talks much. He gives the essence in a few sentences. Aspirants are trained in the beginning to copy works also. Anyone who copies Sri Swamiji's articles for about six months will have a clear understanding of the fundamental points of yoga, bhakti and vedanta. This will enable him to enter into the depths of philosophical books. Sri Swamiji trains the aspirants according to their temperament, capacity and taste. He does not administer the same medicine to all, as some do. A vedantic student gets lessons in vedanta; a student of raja yoga is given lessons in raja yoga; a bhakta is trained in the path of devotion. Those who are advanced in meditation are not given any kind of work at all. They plunge themselves in deep meditation only. Every aspirant is trained in first aid, nursing of sick persons, dispensing, compounding of mixtures, etc.

Common meditation is held in the Ram Ashram premises at 4 a.m. Short lectures on *Gita* and *Upanishads* and practical sadhana and meditation are given by Sri Swamiji at the end. Outsiders also join this function.

Students are asked to write essays on different spiritual subjects. They are also trained in conducting spiritual classes and delivering lectures, to enable them to do propaganda work at out-stations.

Besides these, the Second Annual Report mentions 'tongue-discipline' measures too:

Sri Swamiji prescribes saltless diet on every Sunday and fruit diet on ekadashi days to the members of Ananda Kutir. Such a discipline in diet will enable one to have control over the tongue. Swamiji gives us a glimpse of the way in which he trains disciples: "The early morning (4 a.m. to 6 a.m.) is highly favourable for deep meditation. The atmosphere also is charged with sattvic (pure) vibrations. Without much effort one can have wonderful concentration at this period.

"From my kutir, I used to chant aloud several times the mantras: Om Om Om, Shyam Shyam Shyam, Radheshyam Radheshyam, and thus made my students get up early for prayers and meditation. This had no effect on the dull type of aspirants. I arranged their night meals before sunset. That enabled some to get up in the early morning. It is only those who load the stomach heavily at night who find it difficult to get up early in the morning.

"In the beginning stages of sadhana, if people meditate alone in a room, they get up in the morning only to find that they are again overpowered by sleep, and spend the whole meditation period sleeping in a sitting posture. This gave me the idea of a common prayer and meditation class during brahmamuhurta. One student would ring the bell in front of every kutir and collect the aspirants in a common place for the collective sadhana. I joined the group daily for some years.

"The function started with prayers to Lord Ganesha, guru stotra and mahamantra kirtan. One student read a chapter of the *Gita* and explained the meaning of one verse. Another student gave some short hints on concentration and meditation. At the end I spoke for half an hour on attaining quick spiritual progress and suggested various methods of destroying the evil tendencies of the mind and controlling the turbulent senses. I laid great emphasis on ethical perfection. The function came to an end with the chanting of the shanti mantras (peace chants) in chorus. The students kept up the divine consciousness even during their work in the day. Some students lived in Brahmananda Ashram, a furlong away from my kutir. On many occasions I paid surprise visits to the kutirs at 4 a.m. and chanted OM several times and made them get up for prayers."

(Swami Paramananda relates:

I was put up in a room at Brahmananda Ashram in 1934. It was mid-winter. One day at 4 a.m. Swamiji came to my kutir all the way from Ananda Kutir on that biting wintry morning to wake me up. It was a distance of nearly half a mile. Peeping through the window he called, "Maharaj! Om! Maharaj! Om!" Twice I got annoyed and replied, "What do you want?" I could not make out who was standing at the door as Swamiji, it seems, had his voice purposely changed. Again, "Maharaj! Om...!" Now it was definitely his voice. I got up as though in a shock and Swamiji mildly said, "Maharaj, you are sleeping. It is brahma-muhurta." I replied how the previous night I kept late hours busying myself with urgent work of the ashram. Swamiji joyously remarked that when a sleeping man is disturbed he would lose his temper, but that I was very mild and sweet in my reply!)

Swamiji continues:

I did not compel all the students to join the common meditation. I permitted them to have their own sadhana in their kutirs. Thus I paid all my attention to the spiritual upliftment of my students. Even now, many students who attended the common prayer and meditation in those days say how they were inspired by my short speeches on sadhana. In the evening also I organised a 'Study Class' between 3 and 4. I asked one student to read a chapter from any of my books. On the next day I used to put-questions on the important points. I trained the aspirants in a variety of ways. They could all chant the mantras of the scriptures, conduct kirtan and deliver short lectures. I asked one student to put questions and others to answer them. In the evening class I introduced likhit japa and in the early morning tratak and other yoga exercises. During the day they would all prepare essays on yoga and philosophy and write about their own experiences.

Swamiji attended all the classes that were conducted, from 4 o'clock in the morning. He used to go to the temple and then to the Bhajan Hall for meditation classes. Even though he was much older than the students and could not do many asanas, still he would tie his dhoti up and join the class. He did not conduct the classes nor did he have to be there, but still he went. In winter if it started raining in Rishikesh the cold was terrible and we did not have heaters. His room was right on the bank of the Ganges and from four till about nine in the morning a vicious wind blows down from the Himalayas. Swamiji would put on his big overcoat and turban and come out of his room with a hurricane lantern in one hand and some bags in the other and go to the Bhajan Hall. Sometimes if it was raining hard there was nobody there — because everybody anticipated that since it was raining and cold, Swamiji would not come! He would wake up the few people who used to sleep in the Bhajan Hall. (That was the only time when he did not mind waking people up; otherwise before 4.30 a.m. he never disturbed anybody's sleep). He would then ask one of them to go and wake up everybody else and bring them to the Bhajan Hall. That was how strict he was in the beginning. Afterwards he did not bother.

Definition of a Disciple

The Divine Life magazine of June 1939 contains an interesting

notification which gives a significant definition of his own disciple by Swamiji:

CAUTION: Some sannyasins went to a shop in Rishikesh and took Van Houten's cocoa, a knife, and an umbrella in my name, and said to the shopkeeper that they were my disciples. Kindly do not give any money to any sannyasin who comes to you and says that he is my disciple. My disciple will not ask for money. That is the sign. You can give any sannyasin one meal only. — Swami Sivananda.

In an article published in *The Divine Life* of March, 1947, Swamiji gave this vivid picture of his ideal disciple:

Siva's disciple has divine qualities. He is noble, gentle and soft. He has abundant mercy. He never begs. He always gives and gives. He has a very large heart. He mixes with all, serves all and loves all. He sings the Lord's names. He does kirtan. He is very efficient in doing service. He is an adept in karma yoga. He does puja (service) in the temple. He chants Rudram and he takes part in akhanda kirtan, starting akhanda kirtan wherever he goes. He does japa and meditation. He practises asanas and pranayama, bandhas and mudras. He practises the yoga of synthesis. He knows thought control. He is efficient in yoga and vedanta. He is always a practical vedantin.

He does cooking, proof-reading, typing, nursing, doctoring and lecturing. He is a writer. He is a journalist. He conducts classes in yoga and vedanta. He is simple and humble. He always addresses everybody 'Maharaj' and greets with 'Om namo Narayanaya'. He salutes first. He serves the poor with bhav. He respects every being and commands respect. He never uses vulgar or harsh words.

He has perfect tolerance for all faiths and religions. He talks a little. He is very silent, but dynamic. Work is worship for him. Karma, bhakti, yoga and jnana are inseparable for him. He is a bhakta, yogi and jnani. He is very busy in doing good to others. The spirit of service is ingrained in him. You can know him now easily. You can understand him now clearly.

Swamiji was always emphatic in his insistence that the sadhak workers of the ashram should diligently cultivate what he called 'the sadhu

element' as opposed to 'the babu element'. Two inmates had left the ashram on false pretences and excuses. Referring to them (or what they lacked) Swamiji said (on the 27th October, 1949):

You may be a very good worker. You may be a brilliant scholar. You may be able to recite the *Gita*, *Upanishads* and *Brahma Sutras* from beginning to end. You may be an expert in hatha yoga kriyas. All these are no good if you do not possess the sadhu element. What is the use of study, meditation and bead rolling? What is the use of standing upside down for three hours? Remember this point well: if you do not have the sadhu element, you are a failure as a sannyasin.

The sadhu element is a peculiar mixture of various noble qualities. It is an indescribable something which you would identify at once when you see the man who has it. It is comprised of humility, fortitude, forbearance, forgiveness, tranquillity, spirit of service, adaptability, cheerful surrender to the Lord, freedom from anger, lust and greed, and a complete absence of the complaining spirit. One who has the sadhu element in him will be ever joyful and he will take everything calmly. Everything is God's grace. He will have no occasion to complain.

The babu element, on the other hand, will have nothing but complaints. If there is a little less sugar in the tea one day, if tea is given late one day, he will fly into a rage. He will be a cut-throat. His heart will be full of hatred, jealousy, greed and lust. He always hankers after power and prestige. He is fond of back-biting, scandal-mongering, plotting and diplomacy. He has a vigorous scheming brain. He is selfish to the very core of his being. When you move with him for a couple of days, you will at once know his nature: beware of such people.

All your sadhana should be directed towards the development of the sadhu element in you and the eradication of the babu element. You may be an illiterate man, unable even to talk a few words; but if you have the sadhu element predominant in you, you are a sage.

Swamiji amply illustrated the sadhu element in his own life. He revealed that when he used to go on propaganda tours, people used to garland him as soon as he got down from the train at various places, but he used to carry his luggage in his own hand.





Maker of Saints

Swamiji was like the legendary philosopher's stone which turned all metal into pure gold. He had the knack of transforming men into jewels. He did this by superimposing saintliness on all. He ignored a thousand vices and emphatically exalted a single virtue that may just by mere accident adhere to a corner of the personality of the individual. He condemned none, he disregarded none. To him there was no wicked man on earth who did not have his own good points. None was incorrigible. In his vision the eternal sinner did not exist. He saw God and godliness everywhere; and the supreme dynamism in him transmitted his own soul-force which instantly awakened the dormant goodness in all and strengthened virtue where it existed. Even the beneficiary was unaware of this.

The following letters (written to Swami X in 1934) show that Swamiji expected his disciples to devote their whole-hearted attention to the cultivation of this most wonderful quality of 'See no evil' and of ignoring destructive criticism:

Forget everything entirely. Don't bother. Our work will suffer. When people speak about... turn a deaf ear. Don't write any letter to... by way of reply. Let the past be buried. Don't brood. Take away the mind and apply it to the work, japa and singing. Even if a thousand people poison my ears and mind by speaking ill of you, I will not believe. Do not waste all your energy in worrying unnecessarily. Our work is increasing by leaps and bounds. Shall we attend to public scandal and criticism or proceed to march on with our yogic activities? Forget. Forget. Forgive. Forgive. Be cheerful always. Be bold. Stand up. Gird up the loins and preach vedanta, yoga and bhakti everywhere. Don't worry even a bit. No one in the world can hurt you. You are invincible. Roar like a lion on any platform, resting on Truth. The slight defects in you will vanish soon. Don't bother. Atman is all purity. It is spotless. Thou art spotless - stick to this idea. The impurities will vanish. This is the positive method of eliminating or eradicating all defects. Strength, joy, peace, bliss, immortality is your very nature. Assert. Realise.

One should not criticise others. Nor should the spiritual aspirant bother himself about the unhealthy, destructive criticism of others. He should be ever intent on positive, constructive work. That is the ideal that Swamiji placed before all.

His extreme solicitude for the disciple's welfare and his great eagerness to avoid a misunderstanding growing into a clash are evident from the next letter written two days later:

Let everything subside. Rest in peace. Are you the Atman or the mind and body? Even if you have read 1001 times all my writings, still you identify yourself with mind and body. People can criticise your mind and body. You yourself dislike your body and mind. Those who criticise your body are your friends. Then why do you get agitated? You are weak. Ignore criticism. Why do you brood over past things? This is a bad habit. You can't have peace of mind. Rise above criticism and remarks. Do good to that man who wants to poison and kill you. Put it into practice.

The next letter on the same subject states the instruction in the clearest of terms:

Bear insult and injury. That is the nature of a sannyasin. That is spiritual strength. That is the balance. To be moved by trifles, to worry for months and to waste energy uselessly is not wisdom.

A noteworthy point in this crisp note is the declaration that 'to bear insult and injury' is the innate nature of a sannyasin, and not a matter of policy or expediency, nor even a sadhana. This is the supreme ideal; though we ought to practise it as a sadhana in order to reach the stage of perfection. In a few words Swamiji has given us the essence of the Bhagavad Gita and the yoga taught in it by Sri Krishna.

The last of these letters gives us a glimpse of the stern master who would use all his methods of persuasion and loving approach, but would not hesitate to rub the lesson in, in case of need:

Don't publish any personal matters regarding C. Be careful. When the party feels a lot, how can you poke or rake up the matters again and again? It is not the duty of a sannyasin. Keep the mind cool and direct attention to our publication, meditation and other works. This affair is serious. I want you to keep absolute quietude in future. This needs your immediate attention. I don't want to hear your arguments and justification, etc. The matter must be absolutely stopped. You need not send me a reply. But, kindly see

that you act up to my repeated requests immediately, without fail. Sannyasa is for peace and constructive work. What more shall I write to you?

Swamiji would tolerate any defect or shortcoming in the growing aspirant except when it came to actions or behaviour which undermined these two fundamental factors in the mission — peace and constructive work. In 1937 someone had written a forged letter to Paramanandaji, purported to have been written by Swamiji himself, that Paramanandaji need not come back to the ashram as his services were no longer required by Swamiji. This naturally upset the devout disciple. He wrote back to Swamiji. Here are Swamiji's touching, moving and spiritually illuminating replies which not only reveal the master psychologist in Swamiji, but also the principles of divine life, the fundamental doctrines of sannyasa, and the great ideals that he embodied in himself and wanted his disciples to emulate. The letter is dated 7th August, 1937:

I have not written any such letter to you. It is a forged letter prepared by possibly Swami B. or Swami A. Kindly compare this signature very carefully with others. You will find out the thief. Kindly send the letter per registered post for my perusal. I presume it must be a typed letter. Can you make out whether it is typed on our machine or any other machine and by whom in our group? Some days ago, there was trouble here. B. created some mischief. So, I have asked him to leave Ananda Kutir. A. also had to leave. They are living outside. They have planned this to create ill-feeling between you and me and to drive out Y from A.K.

You ought to have understood immediately: "Swamiji will never write such a letter. Possibly it is some mischief."

Everything will be alright. Be not troubled. As soon as the work is over, come here immediately. You need not wait even for a single moment. Do not worry a bit even for a second on this score. It is the mischief of scandal-mongers. He who does wrong action will reap the fruit. The Law of Karma is inexorable.

I wanted to send you a wire: "Don't worry. It is forgery. I have not written any such letter. It is mischief done by somebody. Letter follows." Then I thought a detailed letter will explain matters clearly.

Do not feel anything now. Be cheerful. Everything is a false show. Some mischief has been done out of jealousy. It is very difficult to

find out the man. You need not come here soon if there is work there, on account of this perturbed condition of mind caused by this affair. Be cool. Do sufficient work, because this is the last and final year of your going to Madras. Collect all the rays of the mind and be calm. Forget the past. Do as much work as you can. If it is really mere reproduction, if the work is delayed on account of financial difficulty there, you can come here on 4th September. Do not be agitated. These little difficulties and disturbances come in the way to strengthen you, to strengthen me. We should not be disturbed. All these matters happen to make us strong. One thing I have found out, you become agitated soon. As soon as I received your letter, I was extremely surprised. I could not make out to whom you were writing, because I never wrote to you anything of this kind. Even if you were to find that to be my signature and the envelope bears my own handwriting, you should have thought that someone had done some mischief. Even supposing I had written such a harsh letter, I would have done it for your own good or for the good of somebody. You should not feel like this. I cannot hurt the feelings of anyone, even in my dreams, even that man who wants to poison me, who is injuring me to the extreme. I am developing this one virtue. Be sure of this always, even if such things happen in the future.

This is a strange world. We have to learn many lessons. One of the disciples of Lord Jesus betrayed him. Many obstacles will come to the growing aspirant at every step. We will have to show our strength. Do not be agitated for little things. Be cheerful. Smile. Walk boldly. Think and feel nothing has happened. Don't worry about little things. You have to do many great actions yet. Prakriti is preparing you in a variety of ways. Feel this. Be grateful to the Mother.

These things have happened; yet, I cannot leave either A. or Y. or anybody. All should grow by committing mistakes or blunders. You must forget the past entirely. You can't eliminate evil persons from any part of the world. Wherever you go, you will have to live amidst them. But, have the feeling that 'all are my own Self'. This will change the situation. You should try to love all, even the worst man who wants to destroy you. That is sannyasa. A sannyasin is one who feels he has no body. We should live amidst people who want to destroy us, amidst unfavourable surroundings, and then work and meditate. Then only we can grow. Then only we can

have the unruffled mind of a sage.

Never change your opinion. I am thy servant, well-wisher, friend, brother. Even if you leave me, I cannot leave you. I won't leave you. You always reside in my heart. Thou art dear to me always. I cannot utter harsh words to anybody. If a harsh word is there, I feel for that man. I want to correct him. That harsh word cannot injure him. It will only correct him. You may experience this. You might have experienced this. I am grateful to the Lord who has endowed me with at least a ray of this virtue. I do not mind for higher attainments. Lord has given me this quality. It is His mercy. With greetings of love, joy and peace.

Addendum: It is very difficult to understand the mind of a man even though you move with him very closely for years together, and to understand one's own mind even. God alone knows the real culprit. It is very difficult to find out. You know me fully well by close contact. It would have been a wiser thing to drop this correspondence even after the receipt of the bogus letter, and you ought to have talked to me privately when you came here, even though you have reasons to suspect from the signature and the envelope. This is all unnecessary bother to you, me and all. There is no time for you or me to look into these matters. We should utilise every second in His service and thinking.

You ought to have had this strong belief that I would never write such a letter to you. You have failed here. It does not matter. Man grows and learns by mistakes.

Touchstone of Discipleship

In early 1953, shortly after he had sent away Sri ..., who had been disrupting the activities and harmony of the ashram, Swami Sivananda assumed what he himself referred to as the 'Rudra aspect' (fierce aspect) of his personality. To the assembled ashramites he said:

Moral turpitude is unworthy of a sadhaka and disgraceful in a sannyasin. But, I would let off with a warning the man who succumbs to lust, for instance, and give the person a chance to improve. However, I take even more serious notice of any attempt to disrupt the harmony of the ashram, to foil the mission of the Lord, and to drive a wedge between workers here. You should be

on the look-out for such mischief-mongers who are a deadly canker to the institution and remove them then and there. In their case, I adopt the thundering method; and without even so much as a previous warning I suddenly remove them.

I feel very much for him. I do not like to see anyone who has taken to the path of renunciation denied the safe refuge, that the ashram affords, from the onslaughts of maya. I feel grateful, too, to Sri...for the services he has rendered to the ashram during his stay here. But nothing, no personal feelings that may well up in my heart, can stand in the way of my all-consuming desire to see that the Lord's work is carried on unhampered by discordant elements here. When the weeds have to be pulled out, we should not be afraid of doing so; for it is our duty.

What is lacking in these people is the spirit of dedication. If you sincerely and whole-heartedly dedicate yourself to the divine cause, such situations as this one will never arise. It is this half-hearted seva that gives ample room for the old vicious samskaras to assume great proportions and lead you astray. You may work day and night; but, unless this spirit of dedication is fully aroused in your heart, you will still be wavering in your faith, in your adherence to divine life, and pitfalls will crowd your path. It is dedication and dedication alone that will enable you to crush and destroy your self-assertive ego and to progress rapidly on the path of sadhana.

When this spirit has been fully developed in you, then you will understand the meaning of true humility.

Obedience, dedication and spiritual contact are all interlinked. Only if you dedicate yourself wholeheartedly to the cause will you be able to establish the inner contact with me. Otherwise you may remain here for a number of years and work like a bull; but you will not derive much spiritual benefit.

Petty personal desires and ambitions, feelings of like and dislike and your own notions about the spiritual life stand in your way of establishing this contact. You must daily introspect and find out your own defects. You must every morning pray to Mother Ganges: "It is through Your supreme grace that I am here on Your banks, while millions all over the world long to have a glimpse of You and to have a sip of Your holy waters. Mother! Bless me that I may be pure at heart, that I may stick to this nivritti marga, that I may be free from all faults and dedicate myself whole-heartedly to the divine cause."

Think: what have you all come here for? Is it for quarrelling over an extra cup of milk or a couple of fruits? Is it to fight for position and power in the Society? You have come here to attain Self-realisation. Fix your mind on this great lakshya. Let nothing distract your attention.

Even if you do not aim at Self-realisation, even if you have come here merely for enjoying peace of mind, it is your foremost duty to develop some sattvic virtues while you are here. Virtues only will give peace of mind. Instead, if you spend all your time in idle gossiping and scandal-mongering, how can you enjoy peace of mind? And you will disturb the peace of others, too!

Dissolve all these 'Vedantic Clubs' here, immediately this moment. When three idlers, whether they are sannyasins or householders, meet in a tea-shop, what do they talk about? About God or sadhana? About service to humanity or Self-realisation? No. It is always about someone or other. It may be about Stalin or Churchill or about their guru-bhais and the secretary of the Society. They will criticise everyone in the world, except themselves. And when this group breaks up and the members join other clubs, then the new group will criticise the old group! Disgraceful.

You must be ever busy in service. Work, work and work. There is nothing so potent as work to keep the devil (mind) ever engaged and to prevent it from doing its mischief. You must surround yourself on all sides with work. You must always have a month's work pending with you! You should never have a chance to feel 'I have finished all work'; for at that very instant you give the mind a licence to run riot. There is no dearth of work here. I can give you this very moment enough work that can keep you busily engaged twenty-four hours of the day for two years to come.

But you do not want to come closer to me! You hide yourself from me. It is difficult for me to see many of the ashramites here. Like an Englishman you lock yourself inside your room and I have to wait at your door to give you some work. You do not want to undertake two or three types of work at the same time. You feel that you will then be overworked and you will have a breakdown. Work will never weaken you. Work will infuse new energy into you. It is when your hands are idle that your evil mind gets busy. When you think you have finished the work on hand, you run to the Ram Ashram to read newspapers, or join the 'Vedantic Club' to talk ill of others.

You think I do not know anything. I know everything. I know every bit of every ashramite here, even the new-comers. You cannot hide anything from me. But, it is my nature to give a long rope. I do not make much of silly mistakes committed by anybody; I know it is human to err. I keep a close watch to see if the person reforms himself or goes his own way. Silently I give him every opportunity to reform himself. I give him the right kind of work and the best opportunities of studying the scriptures and of engaging himself in meditation. I excuse a man's faults almost indefinitely! The knowledge of the man's evil-doings goes on accumulating in me; and when the limit has been reached I just send him away.

You think I am all-kindness and love; you think that I am fond of work and making others work. Yes, so I am. But you do not know my Rudra-aspect. When by cramming a few phrases, you get puffed up with the pride of knowledge, when you feel that you are indispensable for the mission, then I show you a little bit of my Rudra-aspect. Just one Gandhi, not any institution, brought independence to India; one saint can bring spiritual uplift to the whole world. The institution is only an instrument in his hands; and the institution provides scope for others to evolve. I can carry on my work without any kind of institution. Even today I can dissolve this society, go and live in a cave taking bhiksha, and work wonders. I am not enamoured of B.A.'s or M.A.'s. If B.A.'s leave the Society, some M.A.'s will be waiting to join it. If second-class writers leave the ashram, first class writers will join it tomorrow. It is only one spiritual personality that counts in the world, not thousands of half-baked aspirants.

Even now I can set you an example in renunciation. I can live on two dry-breads and Ganges-water. Overwork, financial worries and above all diabetes, compel me to allow the body a few comforts. You have no idea how much energy I spend daily in so many channels. I must give that back to the body and keep it in a fit condition to serve. With all this, I fast completely on ekadasi, and take saltless diet on several days of the week. Does any one here do this?

On the contrary, you are quarrelling over an extra cup of milk! You are fighting for fruits. If at this young age, when you are full of radiant energy, you do not practise renunciation, titiksha and self-denial, when will you do so? You have no contentment at all. That is why there is no Brahma-tejas on your face. If you have content-

ment, there will be lustre on your face, sparkle in your eyes; and you will radiate peace and bliss. But when your heart is torn into shreds by cravings and desires, when you are ceaselessly craving for petty things of the world, what spiritual progress can you achieve?

It is better, then, for such people to go out into the world, marry and lead a proper household life. Otherwise, you will miss both! You would have denied yourself the pleasures of worldly life, and would have achieved nothing in the spiritual life, either. There is no use of vegetating here. You must be dynamic. You must be full of spirit, vigour and enthusiasm.

Supposing you were leading a household life, would you be daily taking milk and fruits? Ask yourself. If you are earning Rs. 150 a month and if you are the head of a family of five members, would you enjoy the luxury of a banana even once a month? Never. You would, on the other hand, think that it is a waste of money. Your mind would not even think of such things. Why? Because you feel you are responsible for the family maintenance, that you should save money in order that your children may have their education. But here you do not feel any such responsibility. You have no feeling at all for the institution! If you have, there will be no problems at all. All your efforts should be to further the cause, to find out ways and means of utilising the income of the ashram in the best possible manner so that the maximum good can be done to the world. You should completely identify yourself with the cause: then and then alone will you understand what karma yoga means.

But you are not interested in the ashram. You think that you can deceive the authorities here and further your own selfish ends! You are fond of keeping a private purse! You have your own bank accounts! A private purse and a cheque book are the greatest curse to a real sadhaka. They throw you into the abysmal depths of samsara. When you are in an institution that nourishes you and looks after you, providing you with all that you need, where is the necessity for you to keep a private purse? When you are serving the institution selflessly, and when you have no private outside contact, from where do you get money for your private purse? The desire for private money intoxicates you. It drives you to adopt all kinds of vicious methods to earn money for your private account. You serve the visitors as an inmate of the ashram, show all your teeth in front

of them, complain about the ashram and then trade on their sympathy by getting a few rupees from them.

What can you do with that money? All your necessities are provided by the ashram. You cultivate some evil habits. Your suppressed old vicious samskaras get the upper hand now. You get a downfall. You try to drag others, too, with you. You form a party of your own. You do not care for your guru and even criticise him. The little money creates in you a craving for more. You try to drive a wedge between the important workers in the ashram, disturb the atmosphere in an attempt to get power and money. You become a dangerous destructive element. Lust for power and wealth turns your head. You create disharmony. You even go to the extent of turning against your guru and ruining his mission.

Such people do not realise the grave consequences of their action. Guru-droha (antagonism to the guru) is the vilest crime, the greatest sin. He who has guru-droha will suffer terribly in old age. Afflictions with some fell disease like leprosy, mouth full of ulcers, without food, without clothes, uncared-for, suffering intolerably the pangs of hunger and thirst, harrassed by the ravages of bitter weather, they will die a slow death in agony and pain.

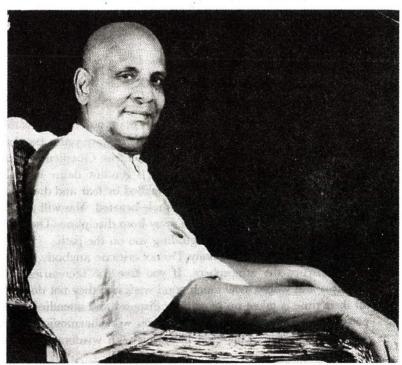
What to speak of service of guru? You should whole-heartedly serve an ashram or institution that has given you food and shelter for some time! Gratitude is a golden virtue. If you do not possess even this fundamental virtue — which even animals possess — how do you hope to attain God-realisation?

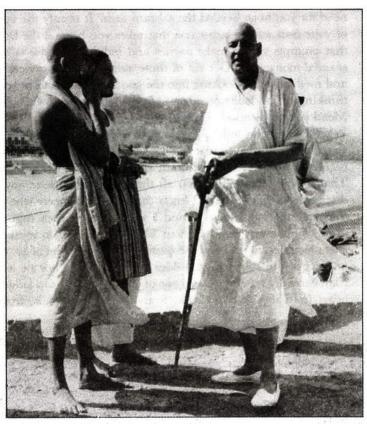
From the very beginning you have adopted the wrong attitude to life. Only if you had served your parents would you know what obedience is, what seva bhava is. When an opportunity for service is offered to you here, you think: "I didn't serve even my parents; why should I serve these people?" That is the granite state of your ego. It can only melt by repeated knocks and blows and by the Lord's grace.

Continuously remember the Lord. Constantly repeat His name. Serve, serve, serve. Work, work and work. When you are not working you should be engaged in fruitful study. When you are doing neither, you should do japa and meditation. I have provided all facilities for these within the ashram itself. Plenty of scope for work and service, books and journals for study, and the Bhajan Hall, mandir and kutirs for meditation. And by God's grace you have food and clothing without any difficulty at all. Is there any

need for you to go beyond the ashram area? It is only the upsurge of your own wrong samskaras that takes you beyond the bounds, that prompts you to make parties and indulge in loose talks and scandal-mongering. Get rid of these samskaras by service, study and meditation, by looking into the good of others and never even thinking of the faults of other people. Mind your own business. Mend your own mind. Evolve, evolve, evolve.

What I have said today is enough to keep you vigilant for three years to come. I have great love for you all. I pray to God day and night to bless you with wisdom, dispassion and discrimination. That is why I am telling you all this. I do not impose any hard discipline on you, because I know there are people here who are in different stages of evolution and I wish to allow each aspirant to grow of his own accord without let or hindrance; to awaken his latent faculties, to get ample scope for the development of his talents and to grow in spirituality. It does not mean that I am too lenient. I am carefully watching every one of your actions. I can judge your heart from the way you look, from the way you talk, from the





smallest details of your behaviour. I can point out your faults then and there and shape your future. But I do not want you to be afraid of me. I do not want you to obey me out of fear. Obedience should spring from love and dedication, from a genuine desire to evolve and grow spiritually. Obedience compelled by fear and dread will not last; it will not be sincere and whole-hearted. You will only be waiting for an opportunity to run away from discipline. Therefore, I adopt this loving method of guiding you on the path.

Live here and work in harmony. Do not criticise anybody. Do not try to disrupt the atmosphere. If you free the secretaries from criticism and worry, how much good work can they not do? Now all their time is taken up in settling disputes and attending to the petty desires of ashramites. If all of you work harmoniously you can work wonders. May God bless you with wisdom and inner spiritual strength!

UNCONVENTIONAL METHODS

The ashram, the Divine Life Society and all that Swamiji worked for and built up during his life time were not only for the welfare of mankind but were also fields of sadhana for seekers after Truth. Once this idea is clearly grasped, the sincere seeker will understand the numerous paradoxes noticed in the life and conduct of Swamiji, the conflicts experienced now and then and the indiscipline that sometimes crept into the institution. Yoga is not a 'subject for discussion at a club table', as Swamiji so wisely said, but is to be practised in the daily battle of life.

Service and charity were always the basic virtues to Swamiji. It was impossible for him to imagine that a human being could live and yet not possess these qualities. Swami Paramananda recalls: "On one occasion he told me that I should always look for opportunities to serve others in any capacity. He would insist on our keeping a small handkerchief in our pockets so that we might clean the shoes of the mahatmas and pilgrims while they were at satsang, without their knowledge — such was his zeal and enthusiasm for serving the Lord in all. If anyone missed any opportunity to manifest these qualities he did not hesitate to 'rub it in'."

At the same time, Swamiji never encouraged mere work alone. The attitude or spirit is the all-important factor in yoga. He never failed to give the young workers wholesome advice on how to keep up the right spirit.

Swami Paramanandaji had been sent by Swamiji to a printer and publisher, to get one of his early books printed. Paramanandaji was urgently required at Madras. Those were the days when Swamiji was living on alms, so the printers themselves paid the travelling expenses of the person sent by Swamiji to do the proof-reading, etc. What happened

is evident from the following letter written to the printer by Swamiji on the 29th January, 1936:

Immortal Self, write Hari Om at the top of each letter 12 times. This is the easy sadhana for Self-realisation: remembering God during activities.

How is it you have not sent me money order for railway fare? When a little money question comes, heart contracts and recedes. Every man is very, very generous for himself, for his wife and children. Others, he ignores, he thinks that they are different from him. This is maya (illusion). This is ignorance. This brings death and misery.

Kindly send Swami Paramanandaji to Madras. He has got some urgent work there. I shall send you another swami, within a month. If you approve of my suggestion you can send me third class railway fare for him. Kindly give interclass fare for Swami Paramanandaji, PLUS any small amount he may be spending during his stay there. You must be a generous man like Sri P.K. Vinayagam of Madras. Kindly supply Paramanandaji with plenty of coffee in thermos flask unasked. This is his food for energetic work.

Have devotion for sannyasins. Take care of their bodies with faith and divine love. Here is a field for thy growth, evolution and emancipation.

May the divine flame grow brighter in you:

Thy own Self

Sivanan da

A much greater degree of service and charity was expected of the sannyasin-disciple, as we see from the following letter dated the 23rd February, 1936, addressed to Paramanandaji who was at Madras at that time:

Kindly send money to Vivek... He wants to purchase some books... Kindly send immediately Rs.8 to Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati as he wants to go to Benares to pursue his studies. Kindly send him Rs. 20 whenever convenient for his books within 2 or 3 months. If you send him some money within a month, he can purchase some books for his immediate use. All this can go into my account. I am giving you a lot of trouble. Kindly, pray, pardon

me. People press me. I have to turn towards thee. What is to be done? We should have mercy and should serve others at the sacrifice of our wants. Sri Sadhu K.C. wants all my books free. Too much pressure on Mr. P.K.V. for free gifts will be a nuisance. But, as he is charitable, he won't feel. The above can be done. Sri Sadhu K.C. is leaning upon me for the growth of his ashram. He is an old man. Let us serve.

This is 'Sivananda style'. Apology is followed by a command; prayer is followed by an admonition; concession is immediately followed by its cancellation.

Sometimes Swamiji would adopt the 'appeal' method for extracting work from his own disciples. They would be made to feel superior, important and responsible. Thus, the charitable nature was developed:

Amritiji is wonderfully improving. He is the senior acharya of the kitchen nowadays. He is the senior typist also. Supply him one fountain pen on my account. 1 copy of *Gita Sankara Bashya* for Nijabodhji, 1 set *Upanishads* translation for Swarupanandaji and Atmanandaji. (1935)

Although Swamiji was the author of the books, the guru and the master who could command, yet there was humility in his approach and he had the great quality of treating his own disciples and servants as people equal to him in status and importance, whose obedience should be won by persuasion and understanding, not by mere directives and authoratitive commands. The following letters illustrate this:

Sri Swami Nityananda Saraswati — a new initiate. He is a great man, very learned in Tamil, a poet; one who has great influence, who stays in Tinelvely for the last 20 years, who now does lectures and builds kshetras for southerners at Benares. He is a Jaffna man. I have given him my only full set of books. He wanted them for his lectures; his disciples will translate and read. Kindly send me one full set of books at once. (23rd June, 1936).

Your friend, that young boy of Swarg Ashram, who never speaks, who was with a towel only without kowpeen, has asked me to request you to send him 1 lb. of snuff! This is also a kind of vairagya (dispassion). The nose has become like a machine gun through repeated usage. He brings in ingenious argument for his

using. You can send the small tin as usual. Let this be your charity towards a virakta mahatma. (10th July, 1936).

Another interesting revelation about this kind of charity: Swamiji said that it will result in some punya (merit) and some papa (demerit) also: "Punya for relieving a bit of their suffering, papa for making them sufferers. Had we not supplied them the habit would have been killed. But the 'Aham Brahmasmi' (I am Brahman) people are above merit and demerit." Swamiji's charity knew no limitations, no codes other than the code of compassion: where there is suffering, relieve it. Offer it to God later.

Swamiji did not treat all people alike: he did not give the same pill to all patients. For instance, he actually encouraged smokers. There was one swami in the ashram who was a heavy smoker. One day he did not have cigarettes. His brain did not function! Swamiji noticed this, so he at once gave four annas to another ashramite to purchase a packet of cigarettes. When this was brought he instructed that the packet should be kept underneath the swami's pillow in his absence.

Some felt that Swami Sivananda was encouraging this swami against his own principles. That was not so, because when the man came to know how Swamiji went out of the way to fulfil his cravings he felt ashamed and automatically gave it up. But that did not mean that Swamiji was unaware of the great and urgent need for a spiritual aspirant to practise self-control. Another letter expresses this feeling clearly:

V. has sent me a postcard asking me to remind you for money order and expressing his difficulty. He bores me and you also. Why are sannyasins keen to get back a small sum? Where is the spirit of sannyas? Let the body rot. What harm is there? A little suffering young people are not able to bear." (6th May, 1936).

Swamiji combined wit and wisdom in instructing his disciples. The following extract is an instance in point:

You will have to add the enclosed article to Yoga in Daily Life quietly, without murmuring or grumbling. This is called yoga in daily life! (26th June, 1936).

Paramanandaji used to relate how once when a disciple staying with Swamiji in Swarg Ashram adopted an attitude of rebellion and refused to copy an article to be sent to a journal, Swamiji silently slipped out of the disciple's kutir. Then, after a day or two when the young man had obviously cooled down a bit, Swamiji approached him again. After telling him a significant Tamil proverb which says: "However much a pregnant woman may cry, she alone will have to deliver the baby", he narrated the following story of a kowpeen both to humour him and to instruct him: "Once a kowpeen (underwear) became disgusted with the duty allotted to it, and so flew away from the clothesline. It fell at some distance, and was greeted by a man who was then in need of some underwear. He promptly put it on and went away. Thus the underwear realised that there was no way out but to do one's duty in a spirit of cheerful surrender."

This humorous instruction had a magical effect on the aspirant who, without a word, took the article from Swamiji's hand and made a copy.

Freedom and Discipline

Swamiji's teaching was a synthesis of freedom and discipline. He was able to combine these two very beautifully and very subtly, though it involved a tremendous lot of work on his part. In freedom he allowed the disciple to grow and as he grew Swamiji pruned. Self-surrender was not demanded, but he created situations in which it became obvious that he was the master, and that there was nothing that he did not know. The disciples would observe how things went on, compare what they would have done with what he did, and see that he was infinitely wiser and infinitely more efficient. When the disciple saw this, surrender would happen.

Usually the guru prescribes the sadhana that the disciple should undertake, but Swamiji never did, except in the case of disciples who were perfectly in tune with him. Even when it came to mantra diksha (initiation into a mantra), he would ask what the devotee's ishta devata (favourite deity) was, and give a mantra suited to that. He would also ask what name was preferred when he initiated a disciple into sannyas.

He allowed total freedom, but waited for opportunities to plant his seeds, to prune, guide, to train — in the sense of turning the direction. For instance, if after doing meditation for six months at the rate of three hours every morning a disciple went to him and said that nothing was happening, he would say: "You should do some Hari Rama kirtan in the Bhajan Hall along with it, then the meditation will be deeper." Then it appealed! If he had said that right in the beginning, probably that suggestion would not have been received so favourably. If that also

seemed to be making the mind dull, Swamiji might have said, "Go and work in the kitchen for a couple of hours a day, cutting vegetables." He made it seem as if the disciple was not doing it to serve the ashram, but to get rid of his lethargy. Then he would say: "Why don't you exercise yourself a little bit? Do some pranayama or yoga asanas." By then the disciple was practising what Swamiji loved most — integral yoga. He merely provided incentive and guidance now and then. He gave the disciple the privilege of freely choosing to do what he wanted the disciple to do!

Thus, Swamiji never forced his will upon his disciples. (Of course, the ashram had to have its own rules and regulations, that was a different story!) Between him and the disciples there was total freedom, but it was freedom that was guided and trained and allowed the student to grow. And growth there was. The freedom was not so free as to allow the disciple to wither away.

If necessary Swamiji would gently give him a prick and wake him up. The prick may have come in a hundred different ways, but it was always gentle. It woke one up but it didn't hurt. This was his supreme grace, not only in the sense of divine grace flowing to all, but it was gracefully done. That supreme grace of Swamiji is perhaps impossible to find elsewhere. He was all things rolled into one — father, mother, teacher, stern master and an extremely loving friend. In all things he was a synthesiser, there was no division. He was always combining all sorts of contradictions — this was his speciality.

Times without number Swamiji insisted that along with selfless service the aspirant should study sacred texts, and meditate. Six hours study, six hours meditation and six hours service was his ideal routine for a seeker. One day he said:

I grieve to find that many a time my own students fail to catch my meaning when I urge them to dedicate their very lives in the cause of selfless service. In no way do I mean them to neglect their personal sadhana in the name of other work. Systematic sadhana at a set time daily in the early morning and at evening twilight is not at all incompatible with active work during the rest of the day. The point I stress is that even the work should become spiritual sadhana by the adoption of the attitude of non-doer, with the feeling 'I am not the enjoyer'; or the attitude of offering everything that one does unto God, and the feeling 'I am an instrument in the hands of God.' Then your entire daily activity will form worship. Your lives

will brighten up into an effulgent light offered daily to the manifest cosmic Being. You will slowly but surely be transformed. How many pious householders are even now diligently practising systematic sadhana together with their social duties! If you rational youths do not see the logic and psychology of the powerful influence that our mental attitude and suggestion exert on all our actions, how then do you expect the masses and the laymen to understand the theory or philosophy of karma yoga? Leave off queer preconceived notions of what sadhana is and what it is not. All selfless activity, reverentially done, constitutes the highest sadhana. If you practise doing all work in the spirit of worship, there cannot be any feeling of despondency at all.

Swami Venkatesananda related:

Sometimes we would be asked to work in the kitchen, peeling potatoes and cutting vegetables, and Swamiji used to insist that during all this we repeat God's name. Sometimes we would all sing:

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare,

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare' as we went on doing the job. The chant would keep reminding us that it is God that does it and unto God it is done. The subject is God and the object is also God, and therefore the action in itself becomes divine.

One day we were all working in the office right in front of Swamiji. Some of us were typing, some writing, some doing the accounts. He had a very lovely way of indicating when he wanted to say something funny. He would put his spectacles up onto his forehead and close one eye and look at us with his elbow on the table. There was a radiant and mischievous smile when he said: "Were you not doing this kind of work in Delhi?"

"Yes, Swamiji."

"So what is the purpose of coming here? You go to an ashram, a holy place, looking for moksha (liberation), and there you do exactly the same thing that you did before in government service. Why did you have to come here at all? Isn't it possible for each one, remaining in his own station in life, to practise karma yoga?"

All of us were silent. Then he himself provided the answer: "It is here that the spirit is awakened. It is very difficult while you are

still engaged in the battle of life, when you are confused, to cultivate the right spirit. Only if you live at the feet of a master can you discover this spirit. When you return to the world it is the same world, but you are not the same, and therefore the world is not the same either. You have a new vision. To train you in this is the role of the ashram."

Laziness

Swami Sivananda was extremely patient with sloppy work, mistakes and inefficiency. There was virtually nothing he would not put up with — except laziness.

How do you make another person work? The first answer is that you must set an example. Swamiji was himself the best example. Once he said: "Not only do I work hard, but I know how to extract work from others." He did this in a delightful fashion. Sometimes he would lean back in his chair and look; sometimes he would close one eye and just look... and then he would smile. In that look and in that smile there was something that was bewitching. He conquered by love.

If the disciple was lazy and did not respond to this, first he would get some fruit, milk and biscuits from Swamiji and perhaps some other gifts. Whenever he went near, Swamiji would greet him and praise his good qualities. This was an indirect way of suggesting: "You are a wonderful man, why don't you do something about it?" Some times a disciple would take the hint and at others perhaps would say: "I am meditating six hours a day." Then Swamiji would respond eagerly: "Very good. You must meditate and do some kirtan and bhajan." If the disciple were to think that Swamiji was encouraging him to do only that, he would become more lazy. Even the fruits and milk would not inspire him. Then, in his presence, Swamiji would start talking about somebody else: "What a dynamic man So-and-so is. Everybody ought to be like that." If the disciple did not heed this, Swamiji might say: "For a change, get up and do something!" He could come down like a thunderbolt for a few minutes, and then be all milk and honey again. If even that failed and the disciple remained lazy, he would be the first person asked to leave when there was a financial crisis.

One dreamy aspirant had acquired a sort of deceptive indolence, imagining it to be a way of expressing inner spiritual tranquillity. One day it happened that Swamiji was conversing with some visitors on the verandah outside the Bhajan Hall. This young man came ambling up the pathway in a leisurely stateliness which immediately caught Swamiji's eye.



Sometimes he would close one eye and just look...

"Come here," he called out. When the young man came he asked: "What is the matter with all of you? Are you being underfed? Is there nothing in the kitchen? Or is it that you don't get time to eat? Your hair is not grey yet. Why then this deportment of a half-starved being? Where is your energy, your youth? Why can't you step about with a bound and a jump? Let me see you sprint. Come, take a run around the Bhajan Hall."

The youth started to run. Swamiji then said with a nod, "I want to send this boy to a military camp. It is only a military training which will instil pep into these entranced hermits. I think this man is born lazy. He seems to think that a life of renunciation is synonymous with physical quiescence and inactivity. Where they obtain such ideas, the Lord alone knows!" Then turning to the young man - who had completed the run and who stood with a sheepish expression on his face - he said: "You should learn a lesson from the busy man of the city or the young medical students. How briskly from block to block, from ward to ward, along verandahs and through corridors does the medico step about in his daily work in the hospital. Why can't you take his example? A world renouncer should be the most dynamic of workers because he has the advantage of being wholly free from the multifarious vexing activities and distractions that beset a man in worldly life. Be energetic from tomorrow. Let me see you run and not walk. Let me see you everywhere at once. Sloth does not constitute sainthood. If it were so, then every chair, table and pillar would have to be canonised. Shake yourself up and turn into a versatile worker."

During the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy classes Swamiji frequently used to pull up any slumbering aspirant and question him: "Do you keep notes of the important points that you hear during these classes?" Most often the aspirant would not. Then Swamiji would continue, "After the class is over, as soon as I return to my room I reflect over the ideas I gathered during the lectures at the class. Deeply meditating over them gives rise to other related sublime thoughts. All these I incorporate in an article and present to the world."

There was a diligent aspirant in the ashram who was fond of meditation; he would be seen sitting on a rock on the Ganges bank for two or three hours every morning without moving in the least. Everyone thought that he was enjoying not only meditation but superconsciousness. One morning, however, Swamiji questioned him about why he was not attending the morning class. He said, "Swamiji, I love to meditate. I am in meditation for three hours in the morning." Swamiji was in a jovial mood that day: "Be careful," he said, "lest you should get drowned in the Ganges. You might go into a superconscious state at any

time and be washed away!"

After a pause, he added: "Do you know the quickest way to enter into that blissful state? I will tell you: take good cold rice, and curd prepared out of buffalo's milk. Spread a nice bed with good soft pillows. Stretch yourself on it. Breathe deeply with a little noise. Relax. You will instantly enter into that state! This assumed superconscious state, sitting on a block of stone, like a block of stone, is nothing better than that." The aspirant was puzzled. Swamiji explained: "Meditation means to 'touch the Infinite'. It is communion with the omnipotent God. Do you know what a tremendous amount of power will surge within you if you really meditate even for five minutes? You can transform the world, you can roll up space like a piece of leather! You can work wonders if you even meditate for a few minutes. What have you acquired by the three-hour meditation that you have been practising all these months? Nothing. Better carry water from the Ganges to the ashram kitchen. Your lethargy will go away. Be active. Serve. Then you will know what purity is. Only when your mind is filled with purity will you be able to meditate."

When a disciple's misdemeanour was reported to Swamiji, unless he saw it with his own eyes he refused to believe the complaint. If it was pointed out that So-and-so had some evil qualities, he had a counter-list of that person's good qualities. For a few days he would shower his love and affection on this person. If the complaint still persisted, it meant there was some truth in it. He would send a great beam of love flowing to the errant disciple and only when he was sure that he had him in his grip, that his heart had been completely conquered, would he gently drop a hint. Even this hint was not allowed to hurt, because if criticism hurts it is counter-productive, and one will rebel against it and turn away. He would never allow that to happen. For the sake of the good that surely everyone has in him, Swamiji would give a long rope to the evil, thus gaining one more brother to the spiritual family.

To him, there was no wicked man on this earth who did not have his own good points — no one was incorrigible. In his vision the eternal sinner did not exist. He saw God and godliness everywhere, and this, coupled with the supreme dynamism in him, transmitted his own soul-force. This instantly awakened the dormant good in all and strengthened virtue where it already existed. Even the beneficiary was often unaware of this. It was in his attitude towards the spiritual aspirants that Swamiji manifested the highest degree of adaptability. No sacrifice was too great in this work of moulding men into saints.

If the seeker had a mere surface defect, like a bad eating habit, he

would soon get over it in the spiritual atmosphere. Lest the aspirant should be tempted away by other minor weaknesses or love of luxury, Swamiji would himself provide these, thus immediately preventing a downfall. He had the conviction that sooner or later the aspirant would overcome the weakness and abandon the luxury. Even if it was deepseated enough to prevent him from rising very high in spiritual practice, he would work as an instrument in Swamiji's divine hands, and that work would elevate thousands of others. This was his magic. The very person whom the world scoffed at, was taken up by him and transformed into a very useful citizen. To spurn a man for the evil that you may see in him was a terrible loss. Swamiji never did that. He would get very good work out of even the devil.

He often illustrated the need for patience and forbearance by the following example: "If you are walking near a thorny bush and suddenly there is a gust of wind and the shawl you are wearing round your shoulders gets caught in the bush, you can't just drag it. If you do, your shawl will be torn. You have to stop your movement, and very gently disengage each one of those thorns. Such patience is necessary if one is to deal with one's own evil nature." Swamiji gave us wonderful, actual and almost daily demonstration of this attitude.

His forbearance was often severely tested. An aspirant might yield to the sage's sculpturing of his personality; indeed he was then truly blessed. Or, he might manifest his weakness and even rebel against his own benefactor. Falsely imagining that he was a saint even at birth, a foolish aspirant would resent the chisel with which Swamiji tried to create a form out of the ungainly mass that the aspirant was. A beloved son might anger his father by such behaviour, but Swamiji would merely suspend the chiselling and shower his love upon the ignorant man, allowing him time to come to his senses. The young man might even go away from the protective shelter of the master and, strangely enough, Swamiji would then look on apparently unconcerned as the misguided aspirant, yielding to egoism, anger or greed, shattered in a moment the beautiful edifice which had been constructed with years of patient and persevering labour. Swamiji seemed to immediately forget all about it — but no, it was then that he performed the greatest miracle. Before he coolly gave the aspirant leave to go, he would unobtrusively spread over him the invisible armour of his blessings that one day surely would bring him back. When such an aspirant returned to the ashram Swamiji would treat him as though he had always been part of it and had never left.

However impossible the disciples were and however rudely they may

have reacted to his training, Swamiji didn't lose his temper or give up hope, but just went on. If the disciple was not able to see what he was trying to do, he gently created a situation in which the disciple *may* be able to see it. That is how he worked ceaselessly for forty years.

It used to be a standing joke in the late 40's that if someone took a complaint to Swamiji against someone else he would refuse to believe it. Obviously no one would fight with someone else in Swamiji's presence — that happens only when the master is not there! So whatever mischief went on happened behind his back. If an ashramite took a complaint against some one he would say: "Ah, is that so?" but he didn't really believe it because he had not seen it with his own eyes. However, if there was a complaint, for instance, that So-and-so was smoking — and Swamiji felt that there was a germ of truth in it — he would write an article on the dangers of smoking. If the man against whom the complaint had been laid was a good typist, Swamiji would ask him to type the article.

There was no confrontation, but it was possible that while typing the article this message might sneak into the heart. If he was not a typist Swamiji would have the article typed by someone else and ask for it to be brought to the evening satsang. In the evening satsangs in those days there used to be lots of reading from the scriptures and occasionally from Swamiji's own writings. That day he would say, for instance "Mukunda, have you typed the article? Please give it to him to read," as if at random and as if he was not very particular who read it. So it was given to the man against whom the smoking complaint was lodged. There in the satsang in front of all the people he had to read aloud, "Don't smoke. Smoking is deadly, it poisons your lungs, etc. Therefore stop smoking immediately." It is possible that the smoker got the message!

Often he would ask an aspirant to give a talk. If he were a man of bad temper for example, he might be called on to give a talk on anger to some group. He could not say that anger was good, but that a spiritual aspirant must be absolutely calm and patient and so on. As he went on saying this, inevitably he himself would listen to it.

To many perhaps, Swamiji was only a teacher who taught them, or just a good man who looked after them. Many went to the ashram as destitutes, he looked after them; many went in despair, he gave them some hope; many didn't know what to do with themselves, he gave them some work. He was several things to several people. He often came down to the common level to help people — not because he loved their company, but in order to lift them up. If they refused to be lifted up he left them where

they were spiritually. Then he treated them as destitutes by providing the necessities of life — that is what they wanted!

An incident on the 8th March, 1949, gives us a glimpse of the superhuman workings of Swamiji's mind and his divine way of looking at men and problems. Someone had had a misunderstanding with another. Swamiji patiently heard both sides. The verdict proved to be a most strange one — strange in the sense that no court of law in the world has this simple commonsense way of seeking the good in both the accuser and the accused, and then striking at the very root of the problem and eradicating the root there itself, instead of simply cutting off the branches.

To the accused, Swamiji said:

In the field of active work alone, man comes face to face with his own inner contents. The inner nature is dormant while one is away from the battle-field. When favourable opportunities offer themselves, then the inner hidden traits have a chance of manifesting themselves.

There must be some truth in what the other man says. This is the attitude that every sadhak must adopt. Then sit, reflect, analyse your own self and find out what hidden trait he has pointed out. Some people's nature is sensitive. Their sensitivity is too highly strung, but we should not consider that a defect in them and prick it. We should mind what we do. We should, on our part, understand and respect that sensitiveness.

His sensitiveness has felt that something that you said was offensive. At once you should feel thankful to him. Thank him who points out your defects. This is the basic virtue that every sadhak should cultivate and develop. Then only is there a chance for one's own improvement.

To the accuser, Swamiji said:

If every one aspires to be a sadhak, there will never be any complaint, a rub or a quarrel. A sadhak's attitude should always be to work selflessly, to aspire to be a good, perfect sadhu. Then there will be no need to revolt. God has given us all comforts. You have never felt the pinch of hunger: you have never suffered insecurity, nor exposed yourselves to the mercy of nature. You have found a prosperous institution to care for you like a loving mother. I have known what it is to run to a kshetra to take alms. I have

known what it is to sleep on the roadside. These should always be held before the mental eye of a sadhaka. These are the principles of a sadhu's life. We should compare our status with that of the Rishikesh-sadhus. We are a thousand times more comfortable than they. We should be thankful to God for that. This complainingmentality should go.

To both he said:

This incident reveals the fact that there is somewhere a disharmony of hearts. A quarrel arises only when there is this disharmony. Otherwise, the accuser refuses to accuse, and the accused readily admits the accusation. Then there would be no need for courts of law. All people should develop this 'one-family spirit'. Then only quarrels will cease. There should be harmony of hearts. Your heart should beat in unison with all hearts: you should love all. Once there is rupture it is very difficult to patch it up. But this is quite possible; what is required is a continued, uniform and prolonged love approach, so that the other party will have time enough — first to get over the grudge, then to get over the suspicion of your inner motives of love, and ultimately to understand your true nature.

Sannyas

Swamiji welcomed everyone to his ashram, and gave mantra diksha to anyone who asked for it. As time went on he gave sannyas initiation almost indiscriminately to young and old. He gave it in person and through the mail, to men and women, Indians and foreigners.

In a talk on sannyas he said:

The *Upanishads* emphatically declare that immortality cannot be attained either through the performance of selfish actions — even though they may be good and virtuous — or by any other means other than renunciation. Only by renouncing the feeling 'I am So-and-so, or Such-and-such', only by annihilating egoism and mine-ness, can man attain immortality.

No doubt the path of renunciation is a thorny one; it is the razor's edge. But there will always be brave heroic men of discrimination who will be fired with the zeal to renounce the world and lead the life of nivritti and attain Self-realisation. You will always find in the

world such supermen of higher wisdom who are fired with intense dispassion and yearning for liberation. They will renounce the world and embrace sannyas. There will always be sannyasins in the world. No political or social doctrine or system can put a stop to people renouncing the world and leading the life of sannyasa. Without spiritual men of renunciation and spiritual leaders there can be no peace or happiness in the world. They are the suns that dispel the darkness of ignorance and vice. They are the very foundation of a nation and the world at large.

It is the duty of enlightened society to support such men of renunciation and to help them in every possible way in their search for truth. They, in their turn, should serve society and give men and women the priceless spiritual food.

Some people ask me why I admit young men into the ashram and give them sannyasa. They are most fit for sannyasa. Only young people can practise intense sadhana and tapas (austerities). What can an old man do? Just when he is about to die, someone will utter the mahavakyas (great sentences e.g. 'Thou art That', etc.) in his ears which have already gone stone-deaf! Of what use is such sannyasa?

I want fiery young men, brave, dispassionate and wise, with iron will and ferro-concrete body and nerves, who can pulverise the Himalayas, who can sip the waters of the ocean, who can devour death like a pickle, who can swim across the Pacific, who can uproot Mount Everest, who can swallow a ball of fire! Glory to young sannyasins who have dared to defy the worldly temptations and embrace sannyas...

These aspirants appear to be young only to your superficial vision. They appear to be young only so far as their body is concerned, but they are not young in their mind. Their heart is mature. Discrimination and dispassion have arisen in their minds due to their sadhana done in previous births. It may look as though they neglect their families or leave their parents and wife and children in the lurch. This is not the case. These young men have all renounced the world in search of God. By this act of renunciation they entrust their families to the care of the Lord. The Lord will look after them. Indeed, it is God who protects everyone; it is only due to illusion and attachment that you think that you look after your children or parents. No, no, it is He and He alone that protects you all. When the son renounces the world, the parents



and other members of the family should at once feel that he has done the noblest act; and from that moment they too should regain their faith in God, and they too should aspire in their own station to reach Him.

Not all the sannyasins initiated by Swamiji stuck to their vows. Some behaved in such a way that they brought disgrace to the Order, while others left to become householders. When Swamiji was criticised over these incidents he said:

Yes, there are many instances of swamis doing things that are not what is expected of a sannyasin, and many have thrown away the gerua cloth and have married. Yet, they are worthy of your veneration. For, at least one day they were sannyasins. They had the courage to throw up their hands and say "I renounce the pleasures of the three worlds." They had the boldness and daring to stand up against the greatest forces of nature, the forces that maintain this samsara - those of self-preservation and procreation. They were taken unawares when they were a little heedless. Because one man had failed to live up to sannyas you should not think that the Order itself is unsuitable for the youth. What about the names of great sannyasins like Swami Vivekananda, Swami Rama Tirtha, Swami Dayananda? As a matter of fact you will find that most of the noteworthy sannyasins renounced the world while they were youthful. What can an old man achieve? It is mock-sannyas if he embraces the holy order.

GURU AND DISCIPLE

In his books Swamiji has given the essence of traditional teaching, imparting to those teachings the secret message of how to keep in touch with this truth, how to make it an integral part of one's life. The teaching was embodied in him. For instance, though his whole life was one of karma yoga in the truest sense of the word, his actual writings on karma yoga were very meagre. Though he didn't lecture very much, the few words of instruction that his disciples heard from him were unforgettable. He was the living truth for the most part. His actions spoke far louder than a loud speaker.

The enlightened guru cannot verbalise his fundamental experience. What has been written down, committed to memory or verbalised, is only a fraction of the sage's experience. There is something which he has experienced that is inexpressible. Even the little fraction that he is able to verbalise is lost in transmission, because the disciple is not attentive; so Swamiji didn't often encourage people to take down notes when he spoke, but to write down the conversation or dialogue afterwards.

Communication is almost always non-verbal. Often it was found that when a highly inspiring dialogue was jotted down it wasn't so inspiring, because Swamiji's 'hum', his smile and the expression on his face and in his eyes had a tremendous impact and tremendous meaning. That was where communication took place. Communication can take place only when the disciple and the master have become like one, where they are at the same level and on the same wavelength. Then the teaching is picked up without the need for words. It is said in/the Katha Upanishad:



Uttishtata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata. Arise, awake, be vigilant; then approach a great master and attain enlightenment.

The arising and the awakening are the disciple's problem, not the guru's; but Swamiji went out of his way to admit to the ashram people who did not have all these qualifications. He did not hide spiritual truth — it was there, published — and he did not parade his knowledge. That was an extraordinary trait in him. Many swamis and yogis when asked even a simple question like: "Can one bathe in the Ganges in the winter?" would give a whole talk on vedanta: "You are not the body, you are not the mind. You are the immortal Self." It is not the immortal Self that feels the cold, it is the body and the mind that feel cold! Swamiji never spoke like this. If at all, he erred on the other side. He was more interested in the aspirant's physical and intellectual welfare, rather than impose a sort of religious instruction everytime one sneezed or coughed. He waited for the aspirant to ask a spiritual question, and when the seeker was keen he communicated that knowledge in a mysterious way.

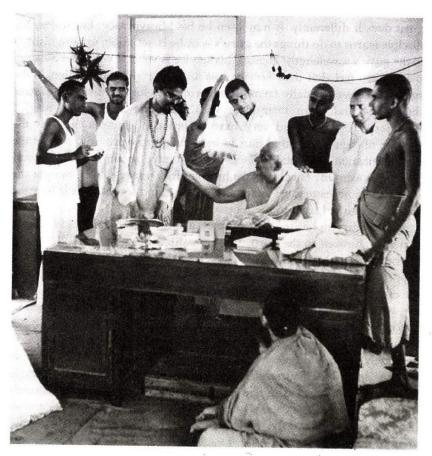
It was the tradition in those days for holy men to hide themselves in a cave, and wait to be approached by qualified disciples who had experienced an inner awakening, who were vigilant and keen and who at great expense of energy and time went to them and asked for instruction. Swami Sivananda adopted this tradition to a great extent by 'veiling his wisdom in a big overcoat', so that the people who went to him often remembered him for his affection and love, for his great concern for their physical and material welfare. These were his main preliminary concerns — wisdom or Atma-jnana came in its own time. But, when in total affection and love the disciple became one with him, then it was easy for non-verbal communication to take place. That was his secret. But, he did recognise that unless a person had wisdom, dispassion, noble virtuous qualities and a steady yearning for liberation, no amount of verbal instruction would be of any use whatsoever, and non-verbal communication became impossible.

Discipleship

In the early days when people went to Rishikesh they found Swamiji radiating bliss, peace and joy, in spite of the fact that all the things that are considered vital to peace, happiness and prosperity were absent. There was absolutely nothing. Living in such conditions he was able to radiate joy. What is *that*, possessing which he led such a life? The expression in his eyes revealed that he had found the Truth. When you looked into his eyes you realised that he had found the Truth and that you had not. That was enough to humble you and make you collapse at his feet.

Early in 1947 Swamiji was sitting in the office. A young man from South Africa, who had stayed in the ashram for about two or three months, was leaving that day. He walked in, prostrated to Swamiji and started crying. With supreme love and affection Swamiji looked at him. He said, "Swamiji, I have to go today, and in Africa where do we get a guru like you?"

Suddenly Swamiji's expression changed, and with a very beautiful, meaningful and mischievous smile he said: "Huh, you don't find a guru in Africa?" By this time the man's grief had gone, his tears had dried up. He found Swamiji laughing and smiling. Swamiji then fixed his gaze on him and said, "It is very easy to find a guru, it is very difficult to find a disciple. Be a disciple! From head to foot be a disciple! Then you will find a guru."



"Be a disciple!"

Swamiji never said, "I am your guru." Occasionally he used to say, "You are my disciple," or "He is my disciple," and to his early disciples he wrote: "I have accepted you as my beloved disciple, I shall serve you and guide you." When he said: "I have accepted you as my beloved disciple," the disciple felt that he had a claim over Swamiji and could write to him more freely. That is what Swamiji wanted. The next sentence was: "I will serve you." The disciple is supposed to serve the guru! So in that formula itself he cancelled the idea of him as a guru. He never regarded himself as a guru. It was for the disciples, not for him.

Service of the guru is extremely important. It is by serving the guru that one discovers the guru's wave-length and how to raise oneself to it. The disciple does something in a certain manner, in a certain spirit — the

guru does it differently. It may even be his idiosyncracy; but unless the disciple learns to do things the guru's way, he is not going to raise himself to the guru's wavelength. Hence, this service is valid. Even when Swamiji made them feel that their service was an important contribution to the mission, he was actually creating opportunities for the disciples to tune themselves and align themselves with him, not because he needed their service. He worked very hard in order to create a field for the exercise of their talents and thus to help them grow inwardly so that the communication could take place. For instance, a couple of musicians joined the ashram. For their sake he organised music classes, bought the instruments necessary, set apart a room for it and so on. This is how the transmitter tuned itself to the receiver!

Swamiji emphasised, again and again, that the disciple should surrender himself to the guru, but he realised that this surrender could not be forced either by the guru or even by the disciple himself. It had to happen; but even that he made happen by creating the necessary field for the exercise of surrender. For instance, he might say something concerning what he wished to be done, but then spread out a whole lot of alternatives. The disciple would naturally choose, and from that choice Swamiji would know exactly where he stood — whether he was arrogant or merely vain, indifferent or hypocritically humble, or truly humble with the spirit of self-surrender. At the same time he enabled the disciple to realise where he stood and he gave him an opportunity to study himself in that situation. Thus the disciple was enabled to discover the ego and its play. When he realised the ugliness of the ego's activity, surrender would arise in him.

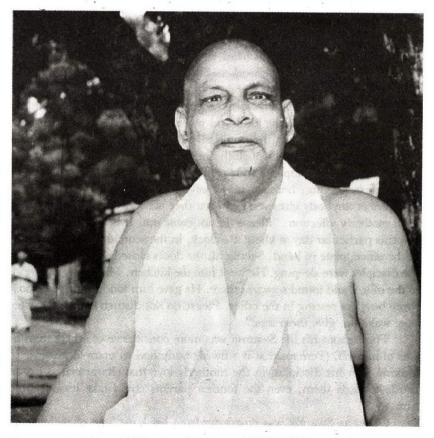
Supreme Solicitude

In the early years of his mission, Swamiji was strict about admitting aspirants into the ashram; they had to lead a very hard life. He told applicants in no uncertain terms what the conditions of living there were. But after he had established the ashram and had ensured the creature comforts of the sadhaks, he was eager to admit more and more people into the ashram so that all could have a chance of evolving spiritually.

Swamiji worked ceaselessly so that the aspirants who had taken shelter at his feet could be saved from experiencing the difficulties that he himself had had to face during the early days of his life at Rishikesh. He would go to any length to save them from wasting precious mental energy in anxiety over the ordinary creature-comforts of the body — food, clothing, shelter and medical care — so that they might be free to pursue

the path they had chosen.

Having fully experienced the danger of extremes, he would say: "It is good that you reject luxuries, but do not hesitate to accept certain simple comforts that form the minimum necessities of the physical part of man. If you are required to engage in active work for some period, then do not deny yourself some substantial nutritious food. While you do mental work keep some cooling oil like brahmi amla oil for your head. Do not refuse fruits when I give them to you." Thus when sadhakas engaged themselves in study and writing work Swamiji would press them to take a little extra milk and ghee, and offer them almonds and nuts, etc. If they declined to take it, Swamiji's advice would be, "This is not wisdom. Do you want to court diabetes and neurasthenia? Look at what my austerity has done. Dry bread and plain dhal is not the sole test of 'sadhuism'."



"Do you want to court diabetes?"

No one in the ashram had greater physical disability than Swamiji himself, and yet there was no one who worked harder than he did. The moment he found an aspirant not well, even if it was only a mild headache, he would say, "Please go and rest," and depute a doctor and half a dozen others to attend to him. However, when he himself was ailing he would sternly brush aside the doctor's plea that he should rest the body a little. This was one aspect in which there was a vast difference between Swamiji's precept and practice. He practiced self-sacrificing service but to others he preached, "Please take care of your health." His love for the sincere spiritual aspirant was incomprehensible.

In 1946 the ashram was fairly poor and did not have many rooms nor many conveniences and comforts. There was not even any protection against the monkeys that used to invade the ashram. There was a very small room which was called the office, with a couple of rickety doors, and adjacent to this was a small room with a low ceiling and a low entrance. (Swamiji used to call this the 'humility' entrance.) Unless one bent down one would lose his head. One midsummer's midday it was so hot that three or four office workers had closed the door of the office as well as the interconnecting door, and were in the back room. When Swamiji had his lunch he would always ask for another plate, and he would take a portion of the food and put it on that plate. After finishing his lunch, without resting, he would take that plate in his hand, cover his bald head with a thin piece of cloth and walk around from room to room giving each of his disciples a little of that food. (In those days this was an extraordinary thing, because many of the swamis would not let their disciples or anybody else even see what they ate.) He would advise them with motherly affection: "Please do not come out. It is very hot outside." On this particular day at about 1 o'clock, in the scorching sun he walked to the office, plate in hand. Seeing all the doors closed, he presumed that the disciples were sleeping. He went into the kitchen, which was next door to the office, and found a swami there. He gave him food, saying, "Those three boys are resting in the office. Please do not disturb them, but when they wake up, give them this."

Throughout his life Swamiji was more considerate of others than he was of himself. (Perhaps that is why his body had so many illnesses). In looking after his disciples, in the motherly love that characterised his attitude towards them, even the fondest parents could take lessons from him.

Once, as Swamiji was emerging from his kutir, one of the ashram workers was coming along the road on his bicycle. The moment he

noticed Swamiji he got off and walked along. Swamiji remarked: "All these formalities are not necessary for me. Love and respect have their seat in the heart; and you should always have love and respect for elders in your heart. That I will know! These external formalities do not have much significance for me. You are going about in the hot sun, making purchases at Rishikesh and supervising the construction work. Do not hesitate to take all that you need. You must have a cool drink now, and half an hour later you should take a hot drink. If you feel like taking some fruits in the bazaar, don't hesitate. You have perfect liberty to do everything to keep your body in perfect health."



Swamiji talking to a group of young aspirants

Swamiji considered that living on the bank of the holy river Ganges at the foot of the Himalayas — doing a little japa, meditation and selfless service — was a blessing, and he was eager to throw the gates open to all. Numberless young men sought the shelter of Swamiji's feet as their refuge in distress. Swamiji would not question their antecedents. The moment he noticed the look of despair in the newcomer's eyes, the latter would be made to feel that Swamiji was just waiting for him and that he was doing Swamiji a great service by joining the ashram. What a psychological strength this gave is impossible to imagine. The destitute person was made to feel 'big', and instantly he felt that the past was a bad dream and that he had a glorious future.

In 1945 a lady who had undergone torture at the hands of her husband gave up her family and sought the refuge of the ashram. Even the authorities of the ashram, brought up in the disciplined ways of Swamiji, hesitated to grant her asylum. But Swamiji was firm in his determination that she should stay. The very thought that she might otherwise end her life was enough to enable him to ignore the whole world and serve this one person. Volumes can be written on the wonderful ways in which Swamiji trained her to forget her woes, to conquer her own mind and ultimately to stand on her own legs as an independent preacher among the women of India. From a liability Swamiji turned her into an asset to society: a true example of rehabilitation.

In 1955 Swamiji welcomed a cook to the ashram. The cook had not come to stay there at all, and he was surprised when Swamiji told him on seeing him the first time, "Please stay here itself. You can open a hotel in the neighbourhood. I will do all that I can to encourage you." He followed this up by asking the secretary to give a room and the necessary utensils for the cook to start the venture. "You can take food in the ashram and carry on your business for your own profit," said Swamiji. A little later he clarified his attitude by revealing: "It is a blessing to live here on the bank of the Ganges, in Rishikesh. Some day he might get the aspiration to renounce the world. Till then it is good to encourage him even in his ambition to earn money. First make him stay here; then slowly convert him to sadhana."

Another lady who had lost her husband was restless and therefore came to Rishikesh and stayed near the ashram. She told Swamiji: "I have got four or five thousand rupees worth of jewels and I have got a house also. I want to stay here permanently. If you permit me, I will dispose of the jewels and house." Swamiji replied: "Keep the house and jewels with you. You may stay at Brindavan." Swamiji gave a letter of introduction to

a very good sadhu at Brindavan and sent her away. He also instructed her: "Tour the nearby villages. Spread the glory of the Lord's name. Conduct kirtan in every house. Teach the young children."

For some time she followed Swamiji's instructions. Then she had some mental suffering. She came to Rishikesh and started making amorous advances to Swamiji. Through the window she would throw some scent on Swamiji's bed. When Swamiji opened the door of the kutir she would come in and sit near him. He would go on with his work, without even thinking that she was there. After some time she would go away of her own accord. Swamiji could well have asked her to go; but no, he would not cause the least hurt to anyone. He was full of love for all.

When this trouble grew intense, Swamiji asked us to put up a barbed-wire fence around his kutir. When she found the fencing around Swamiji's kutir she often grew wild with frenzy. She used to throw stones at Swamiji's kutir. Swamiji even then kept silent. After some time she went away.

Some years later she came to Rishikesh in a sannyasin's robe. She had grown old. Swamiji was never swayed by prejudices. "She might have changed. Everyone is evolving every second. We should not judge anyone by his past conduct," he said. That was his guiding principle. He allowed her to stay somewhere near the ashram. She used to go to Rishikesh Bazaar every day and for some time sing all sorts of nonsense about Swamiji before each shop. She even abused him in public. In the evening she would come to the ashram. Swamiji would send her fruits and almonds.

Sowing the Seed

Many people longing for peace and happiness in the midst of disharmony, strife and fear, found in 'Sivananda Swami of Ananda Kutir' (as he was generally known to all the people in and about Rishikesh) a father-figure dearer than their own kin, while those of a fundamentally religious and spiritual temperament who had made sadhana the sole aim of their lives, found in him a perennial source of spiritual light and wisdom.

Swamiji had a different relationship with different people. Some evolved aspirants came to him blazing with the fire of renunciation, dispassion and discrimination. Training them was on different lines. Swamiji was very rarely seen with them, nor did they move very closely with him. Their relationship with Swamiji was on an entirely different plane altogether — the spiritual plane. They were very few.

The vast majority of the others with whom Swamiji worked and

moved very closely were half-baked aspirants (some of them with not the least spiritual aspiration in them but who were given shelter by Swamiji in order that, as a result of the material failures that had driven them from their homes, they might not end their lives); and Swamiji himself had often to sow the seeds of vairagya (dispassion) in them! "Turn him away I cannot. At least let him have a chance to grow into a better and happier individual. If he fails, it does not matter. An attempt must be made anyhow." Such was the remark of Swamiji when one disturbed young man was admitted into the ashram. Thus, no qualification was imposed on the aspirant. It was sort of a joke that if a young man failed in his exam or in his business, look for him in Sivananda Ashram! Swamiji admitted them freely and then tried to bring about an awakening.

Not all the people who sought the shelter of Swamiji's feet were good people, but Swamiji only saw the good in them; to the evil he was blind. He would never condemn nor be hard on anyone who manifested an evil trait. He used to say, "Never mind even if this man is vicious; by bringing him here and giving them shelter I've insured that there is one rogue less in Delhi." That was his philosophy. "The very fact that So-and-so came here shows that there is a little opening, however minute, through which some sort of communication can take place. Let him stay here, I will plant a seed. In this birth, next birth, never mind; that seed will germinate now or years and years later."

Swamiji said that it is perhaps too much to expect a person living in the modern world, assailed on all sides by distractions and temptations, to develop discrimination and dispassion. He said that even in the case of a person who runs away from failure it is possible to find a spark which could be fanned into a big flame. Sometimes if the spark didn't exist he even ignited it. That was the uniqueness of Swami Sivananda. He planted the seeds of goodness, he nurtured them, watered them and made them grow; though this created tremendous difficulties to himself, he didn't mind at all.

It is not easy to understand now what the seekers who went to the ashram in the early 1940's felt. Some of them would have read Swami Sivananda's flaming words from some of his original writings, which were so inspiring that if you read them you wanted to tear off all your clothes and run away to the Himalayas to practice austerities and attain Self-realisation at that moment! That was the peculiarity of his style. Many seekers thus inspired by his writings went to the ashram. Usually they went without even a change of clothing, because in Swami Sivananda's How to Get Vairagya they had read 'Renounce everything' — and so

they renounced everything; 'Seek solitude' — and so they went to seek solitude in the ashram. Some of them, on entering the ashram, might even have discovered that others who had joined earlier had a nice coat. There was a tendency to feel, 'Ah, they have lost the path, they have fallen away. Look how dispassionate I am. My aspiration is far greater than the aspiration of these people who have been with Swami Sivananda for such a long time. They don't know what tapasya, vairagya and burning aspiration mean. Every morning I am sitting here at 4 o'clock meditating. Look at all these older ashramites.' Swamiji used to watch them and appreciate them.

Whatever the aspirant did, first came the encouragement. Then he would gently push a little bit. "Enthusiasm is very good. You have got brilliant, wonderful aspiration. You are supreme, you are like a Sukadeva. But juvenile enthusiasm is no good." First a lot of butter and then a little bitter pill, was his method. No one should be discouraged or made to feel that what he was doing was totally wrong. His attitude was: "No, do it, it is wonderful, but make sure that it is not only juvenile enthusiasm, something which might lead to a reaction."

Since the students were not only raw, but not even awake, even the awakening influence had to come from the master. On some occasions very senior disciples of Swamiji would go to him with all manner of complaints. Swamiji had to please them also. He would pretend to be really angry. They would be satisfied and go away thinking that Swamiji would deal with the young seeker. On the contrary, the man against whom the complaint was filed would first of all get a couple of bananas. There was a little boy serving Swamiji in those days who would come running and say, "Swamiji gave you some fruits." Half an hour later somebody else might come running, "Swamiji gave you some coffee." An hour later you might have his darshan. He'd say, "You're shining, you're radiant. You're meditating nicely? You're doing japa? Good. You're studying vedanta? Very good." What happened to all the complaints? He would watch to see if this encouragement worked. Instead of saying "You are a bad man," Swamiji insisted on concentrating on the good qualities in you, telling you that you were a great worker, even if you had no spiritual aspiration or devotion at all. He would say, "You really are a tremendous worker. There is nobody who works as hard as you do." Then he would gently add, "Whenever you work, see God in all. Why don't you go and serve food in the kitchen? You're a tremendous man, you've got a nice body and a fine voice. When you serve roti, say 'Roti Bhagavan, roti Narayan, roti Maharaj'. " In this manner the seed of aspiration was planted.

Swamiji would do for the aspirant what even the fondest of parents might not always do. The moment an aspirant manifested the least trace of a hidden talent he would almost dedicate himself to the awakening and the fullest manifestation of that talent in the aspirant. Day and night he would contemplate ways and means of enabling the sadhaka to express himself fully; ultimately for the benefit of mankind. In this manner some of the departments in Ananda Kutir were given birth to and nourished. A young man who said he knew the technique of paper-manufacturing joined the ashram in 1948. The following morning Swamiji asked for pits to be dug and raw materials to be ordered to enable this young man, who had no credentials whatsoever (and which were never asked for by Swamiji), to experiment with his ideas!

Swamiji would take such a keen interest in all these enterprises that one would think that he had just been waiting for that person to come and help him in his work. So thorough was his enthusiasm that in a short while he would give suggestions on how to do a better job of the work in which the aspirant was an adept. Such was the case with the photographic studio in the ashram.

Self Purification

Swamiji sometimes pointed out that Atma-jnana (Self-realisation) is extremely easy. It is extremely easy, but the preliminary to it, the purification which is a prerequisite, is extremely difficult.

When it came to training for self-purification, he adopted very simple methods which were profound in their effects. The training had to be continuous (in the sense of repeated). Swamiji had to do it again and again and again. He had such patience that he never treated anyone as hopeless. If a disciple couldn't see it this way Swamiji would turn it that way and the other way. He went round and round and round until one day he hoped that the disciple would see what he was trying to teach him.

If you had some weakness or the other, Swamiji would turn a blind eye, saying: "He has some weakness but he has also got some great qualities." He adopted the technique of never pointing out the other person's fault unless it had to be done — for instance if there was a confrontation with another disciple and the whole thing was brought to Swamiji's attention and both had to go to him. When it was pointed out it was done so nicely. The first thing he did was to praise the aspirant "You have got this quality and that quality. First of all to be able to renounce the world and to come here and bathe in the Ganges is the

greatest good fortune. You must have done spiritual practices in hundreds of previous births to be so spiritually inclined, and you must have earned the grace of thousands of saints in order to be brought here to an ashram to lead a spiritual life." Then he would add: "Why do you want to quarrel? It is only a little defect. Don't lose your temper. If you lose your temper you might spoil all your efforts. Did you have your breakfast? What did you have? Coffee, tea? Shall I get you some more?" A bunch of bananas came first, then a little bit of a prick which was followed by butter and honey. After the banana had been digested and the butter used up, suddenly realisation dawned: "This is what Swamiji was saying!"

Swamiji never kept his disciples in a state of tension. He would push to bring about this training, but if he found that the disciple was breaking down, all rules would be relaxed.

The fundamental principle in all this was that no one was ever criticised by Swamiji. Criticism would have made it ineffective.

Welfare of Disciples

Day and night the question of his disciples' welfare, growth and progress — secular as well as spiritual — filled Swamiji's mind. Many a time he would break forth into a passionate appeal to his beloved students, urging them with fiery words to root out all traces of personal considerations and give themselves wholly to the noble ideal of service of the world. He would thrillingly depict to them the glory of 'selfless service' as the greatest and grandest of all yogas and worship of the Almighty. Like all aspirants, they would at times feel dismayed at the endlessness and the vastness of human problems and suffering, so then Swamiji would cheer them with the emphatic assurance that a life spent in the cause of universal service was never a failure. He would stir them up by saying:

Never mind whether realisation comes or not. Put forth every effort at attaining ethical improvement to render yourselves perfect for the service of Man. See God in Man. Look upon Man as God. If your concept of God includes the idea that He is all-pervading, then why can't you see Him in all creatures? What makes you hesitate in translating your belief into action? You will have to give up such notions that He is available only behind locked doors and closed eyes. First feel His presence in everyone and everything as you serve; then see whether or not He shines of His own accord in the chambers of your heart. When the heart is not yet free of all impurity and the lower nature rid of its dross, how can spiritual

experience come to you? Until you have rendered your nature perfect, is it possible to realise the truth of a Being who is the very essence of perfection? First root out egoism, anger, hatred, greed and duplicity, by sincere selfless service. Even if you manage to do some little good to ten human beings, if you succeed in destroying one evil trait completely and develop fully a single noble virtue, feel certain that your life has not been lived in vain. Even this, ten people in a million hardly ever achieve. What if you do not have samadhi and Self-realisation?

Cheer yourselves up! Apply heart and soul to this work. I guarantee that you will feel blessed and happy. Feel not dissatisfied with your lot or be downcast about your progress. Act upon my word. Have I not thought about your spiritual welfare? Why, if you could only know you will see that day and night, every moment, my heart is fluttering with concern over your well-being.

Apart from the 'immediate family circle' of aspirants, students and workers, there were many seekers in other countries who had great affection and reverence for Swamiji, and to whom he was spiritual guide and guru. Swamiji answered their letters promptly, answering all their queries and guiding them on the path.

Of this, Swami Sahajanandaji of Durban, South Africa, wrote:

It must be the experience of every devotee of Swamiji that to describe his boundless mercy and compassion is something that can be expressed only by the silent heart rather than by words. Somewhere I read of Swamiji's charity described as being 'reckless', but I think that the manifestation of his mercy and love are even more abundant than his charity. It is nothing remarkable when a first-class aspirant wins the grace of a sage, but when one struggling painfully on the path of God-realisation has the loving attention of a great saint focused upon him, he is certainly filled with trembling awe and inexpressible gratitude. Unfortunately I am one of those who were not born 'pure' or with a generous quantity of spiritual samskaras. But, through Swamiji's grace, victory is being won slowly but surely. It is this love and care given by Swamiji to a fifth-class aspirant like me that marks him out as a God-incarnate sage.

Although we are thousands of miles away from his physical presence, Swamiji looks after us in the same way, if not better than

those living in his proximity at the ashram. To quote a few examples:

Sometime ago I wrote him an urgent letter regarding some physical troubles. This was at the time when Swamiji had just returned from the All-India Lecture Tour. Although he must have had hundreds of letters to reply to, Swamiji was gracious enough to reply to me the same day. More recently I wrote to him about a change in my sadhana routine. Back came an immediate two-page reply in his own handwriting. More remarkable still, something that stuck and made the deepest chords of my heart vibrate was the fact that Swamiji himself addressed the envelope and had evidently posted the letter with his own hands! Imagine an insignificant one like me being showered with so much of his love! And what encouraging and soothing words his letters contain. Every word is saturated with the warmth of his fathomless love. It is this love of Swamiji's heart that makes us feel how unworthy we are to receive his rare blessings.

Swamiji's book-gifts reach us by the dozens. If I ask him for one book, he sends six. Even when a request was made that books should not be sent unless paid for, they arrived with dauntless persistence. Not only do gifts of books reach the shores of this country, but also delicious sweetmeat-prasad arrives here freshly packed in tins. It would not be out of place to mention here an interesting experience that occurred when a friend of mine, Sri G.V. Naidoo, visited the ashram. As soon as he met Swamiji he was literally bathed in love. Swamiji personally attended to him, and my friend left with a pile of books in his hands. He related how, when he was admiring a photo hung on the wall — the scene of Swamiji's tapas-days — Swamiji then and there pulled it off the wall and handed it to him. What a rare magnanimity shines in Swamiji's heart!

Swamiji's healing powers are not without evidence in this far-off country of South Africa. Two cases came within my personal experience. One of my friends who is a patient at a T.B. Settlement used to complain of severe insomnia. I wrote to Swamiji about it. Swamiji's immediate reply contained instructions on how to overcome the trouble. Although the patient did not follow the instructions he began to sleep well. After some weeks, however, he was again troubled by sleeplessness. It is a pity that the instructions were not followed. The other instance was that of a personal friend

who suffered from severe and painful moles on the hands. He was having medical treatment with little beneficial effect. I wrote again to Swamiji. The simple remedy given by Swamiji was followed and my friend has got rid of the moles completely. It is months now and the trouble has not recurred.

How does Swamiji solve the day-to-day difficulties of aspirants who are not fortunate enough to receive his verbal instructions? This happens in a curious way. Sometimes when I am confronted with some troublesome problem, I casually take up one of Swamiji's books and open a page at random, and the very answer to the problem stares me in the face. Sometimes, perhaps, Swamiji's inner promptings are received during meditation; or perhaps it may happen that some incident or person would give the right answer. One has but to be on the alert to receive the proper guidance. But in most cases it would be Swamiji's book that would help us. This has been the experience of other devotees here also, and it happens so often that we have no doubts that Swamiji knows all our difficulties and his guidance is ever with us regardless of the many miles that separate him from us. Also Swamiji has perfect insight into the heart and mind of everyone and one cannot pretend to him what one is not. Once I wrote him a letter seeking answers for a few questions of a spiritual nature. Swamiji found out the truth that the answers were required for the purpose of belittling someone else and he did not give direct replies. From then I dared not hide anything from him. We have also noticed that whatever he said came to pass sooner or later. His words are infallible.

The secret of winning Swamiji's grace is to serve him whole-heartedly. A little service to the sick or a little distribution of pamphlets and you have won a place in the warm chambers of his heart. Everyone of Swamiji's thousands of disciples know the truth of this. Service to Swamiji (which I call Sivayoga) is the greatest yoga of the age. Let those who want to follow the many paths to the Lord's feet do so, but my greatest joy is to serve Swamiji whether it leads to God-realisation or not.

INTEGRAL PERFECTION

Swamiji was supreme in his wisdom, in his efficiency and in his attitude to life. He easily solved the problems that baffled us. In situations where we would have collapsed, he triumphed. Events that would have crushed us did not affect him. These great characteristics were natural to him.

Swamiji was totally in tune with the Infinite. There was a certain rhythm in his life, a certain unmistakeable unchanging factor, but at the same time there was an unpredictability. What was unchanging in his life was the spirit of renunciation, of love, devotion and self-discipline.

This spirit of renunciation manifested as a unique form of nonattachment. No-one loved humanity more than Swami Sivananda did, and this was most evident in his attitude towards his disciples. There was virtually nothing he would not do or put up with.

There was a swami in the ashram who was working heart and soul. He was vital, very important and deeply devoted to Swamiji, who in turn had tremendous admiration for him. One day this swami was bitten by a rabid dog. Such was his strength and vitality that even though he had been mauled from head to foot, he recovered in two or three weeks. How Swamiji looked after him during his convalescence is not for words to describe.

This swami had started working again when he suddenly developed a pain in his left arm. When Swamiji was told he immediately hired a taxi and sent him, accompanied by a doctor, about two hundred miles to a special hospital. Swamiji himself told the doctor "Do all that you can for him. Never mind what the expense is." The next day a telegram came

from them: "Swami improving." When it was given to Swamiji, what delight shone in his face! He was thrilled. Two or three hours later when he had just finished having his bath and was preparing for lunch, another telegram arrived. The man who had brought the telegram was so choked that he could not read it out. Swamiji read it, and there was profound shock on his face as he said, "Ha! He is dead".

The next morning when the taxi arrived with the body Swamiji was on his way to the office. He didn't even turn to look. Within minutes he was in the office, carrying on with his work as though nothing had happened. Twenty-four hours before he had dropped everything so that this one person could receive all attention and be carefully looked after. He had sent away his own doctor to accompany him to Simla, but now that he was dead he didn't mention him again, except in the evening satsang when he conducted prayers for the peace of the departed soul. He loved without being attached, and was unattached without being indifferent.

Out of this spirit of renunciation was born true humility. The following incident happened on the last day of the All-India Tour. Swamiji had been round the whole of India and Ceylon, and had been worshipped by millions of people. On the last day he was in Delhi. His health was not good and he was resting — not at the place where the organisers had arranged but in the house of a devotee, an army officer. He was sleeping after lunch. He was supposed to meet someone at three fifteen, and at five past three he asked, "Isn't it time for us to go? Has the car arrived?" We said, "Yes, Swamiji, the car is here." Immediately he got up, took his bag and got into the car. From inside the car he looked into the hall and saw the officer's wife standing at the door. He asked: "Are we coming back here?" "No," she said. Swamiji turned to her and took leave of her with folded palms. The car moved.

Two or three minutes later he said, "Ask the driver to go back to the house." The car came to a halt at the entrance to the house. He got out and went inside. The lady of the house was not in the lounge but in the kitchen, so he went right through without even calling or making a sound. Standing in front of her, folding his palms, he bowed down, and with tears in his eyes, said "Please forgive me". She couldn't say anything, but started to cry. Swamiji said, "I should have come and taken leave of you properly. I said 'Thank you' from the car. Please forgive me." The lady was in tears and didn't know what to do. She collapsed at his feet and caught hold of them. Then he went back and sat in the car, saying, "Right, let's go." As the car moved on he did not talk for about

five minutes, then he said, "From somewhere a little vanity tried to creep in. One has to be very vigilant."

There was no weakness in his heart nor in his behaviour. He could be strong, inflexible — so in his case even humility was not a trap or a prison. His humility was saturated with intelligence and wisdom. In 1953 we saw this in his encounter with a world famous spiritual leader, who was a leader of millions throughout the world and who, even before he died, was worshipped as an incarnation of God. At this time Swamiji was in bed with a severe bout of lumbago. He couldn't even sit up in bed, but his mind was alert and clear. It was a delight to watch him propped up on pillows, eating nicely, talking and working. He had big thighs which he used as his table. He said, "The only thing I cannot do is turn my waist." Unfortunately this spiritual leader came during that period, so that he was the only holy man that Swami Sivananda did not salute properly. On Swamiji's face you could see the tremendous pain, "Such a world renowned spiritual leader has come and I'm not even able to get up and greet him properly."

The leader came in, along with his disciple. He stood there, and Swamiji, lying in the bed, lifted up both his hands to his forehead and folded his palms, "Jaya Bhagavan. Jaya Bhagavan."

This man merely nodded in acknowledgement and then said, "I have come to know that on one occasion you spoke ill of me."

Swami Sivananda looked at him and then realised that this was not a congenial meeting between two holy men, but an invitation to fight. He said: "I don't remember... I don't remember having said anything against you."

"I have the proof that you scandalised me," the man said.

"I don't remember anything. I don't usually criticise others," replied Swamiji.

The other man continued, "I have got disciples all over the world and I'm going to let all of them know that you are a scandal-monger."

Immediately Swamiji's face became stern, as he said: "Alright. Do what you like. Go."

Swamiji's attendants stood there flabbergasted.

This leader was the only holy man who was received and dismissed so abruptly by Swamiji.

So, humility should not be confused with weakness. Humility can only arise when there is this spirit of total renunciation coupled with the realisation that God is all; not only that God is *in* all, but God alone *is* all.

Swamiji was quite happy to have his birthday celebrated. He even

used to initiate the whole thing. Right in the month of April, one morning he would go to the office and say, "Venkatesananda Swami, have you started preparing the circulars inviting articles for the birthday souvenir booklet? The first circular must be like this, the second circular must be like that... Call some musicians, do this, do that." He used to initiate it all. He himself gave the reason why: "Any occasion for celebration is good. It doesn't matter what you call it — birthday, Guru Purnima or Sivaratri. When people come together, we have some nice satsang. Who is interested in this body being worshipped or not worshipped?" He later said: "When people glorify me, especially on birthdays, just after returning to my kutir I beat myself nicely with a pair of shoes and I say to myself, 'What are you? You wretched flesh-blood-excretamade body? Do you want garlands? Can you not wear torn clothes? Do you think that you are great? Do you want to be prostrated to? Here, take these garlands."

On the birthday we had a huge big plate on which he would place his feet, and about twenty or thirty people would sit around it and throw flowers at his feet. While we performed this padapuja he would sit there, looking around to someone or the other, enquiring about their welfare. These people would not have come to the ashram if the birthday were not being celebrated, so it was an opportunity to bring them there.

Swamiji also took a keen part in having his biographies published. Once the wife of a great political leader visited the ashram. As usual she was welcomed and greeted and offered coffee and fruits. It was also usual for Swami Sivananda to give every such visitor a set of whatever books there were, especially the newly published ones. It so happened that at that time there were only biographies of Swamiji, written by several people. All these biographies also contain one section of teachings, just as the teaching books also contain one section of biography; however, the titles were Sivananda, the World Saviour; Sivananda, Lord Incarnate; Satguru Sivananda; Jagatguru Sivananda, and so on. This lady looked at all those books and said, "Swamiji, why do you allow all these biographies, all this self-glorification, to be published in your own ashram?" Her face showed displeasure.

His answer was fantastic; nobody else could have come up with such a simple answer. He looked at her as if she was his own daughter, and said gently: "That is what brought you here, I think!" And that, of course, was the truth.

The lady was deeply impressed. Though such a proud and powerful person, she did namaskar (salutations) very humbly, and she didn't ask

another question. Swamiji had only his great smile; no offence was taken. There was neither vanity nor the vanity called 'humility'. So often vanity is seen in a statement like, "Look what a great man I am. So many people have written about my life!" There is another kind of vanity: "I don't allow any of this nonsense to go on in my ashram. I don't approve of people glorifying me. What, they've published my picture? Destroy it." Swamiji used to call it maha-vanity (supreme vanity). He had none of this. You could write what you liked about him.

Someone from Madras once sent two books with flashy titles for review, and the price was even flashier - one cost 25 rupees and the other about 40. In those days books were cheap; none of the ashram publications was more than 10 rupees. Swamiji said to Swami Venkatesananda, "Write some nice review to be published in the Divine Life magazine." Swami Venkatesananda took the books to his room and opened one at random. The language was familiar. He had read this whole page somewhere before! He had a bookshelf with Swami Sivanan da's books there, so he pulled down Hatha Yoga. There it was absolutely word for word. It had been copied. On the back of the title page of the new book was printed in big bold letters: "Strictly forbidder to reproduce any of this. The copyright rests solely with the author." He took the book back to Swamiji the next day. Swamiji's only comment was: "It doesn't matter. What a first-class title he has given. He has brought our something nice. After all, it is also dissemination of knowledge, which is very good."

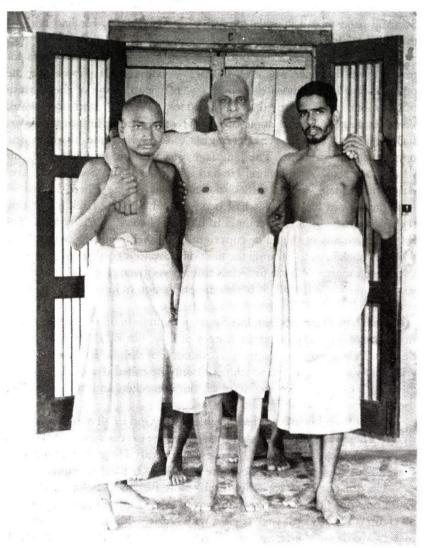
One had to see a person like Swamiji in order to appreciate what love might mean. He was an embodiment of love, but of a type which was distinct. It was not the sentimental romantic feeling which we associate with that word, but a love which could only be called divine. It included all forms of love that we are aware of, but it excelled and exceeded all of them.

Right from his infancy he was able to see God in all and to love God in all. These were his oft-quoted most favourite expressions: 'See God in every face', 'Love God in all', 'Serve God in all'. He gave expression to these ideas, though in him they were not ideas, but living truths.

He did not even treat his disciples as disciples. Before a disciple could bow down, he folded his palms, and asked "Jaya Bhagavan, are you all right?" Those words were packed with honey, with love. They were not merely words — words we can all use — but the inner feeling which flavoured those words was extraordinary.

Once when he was ill with typhoid he wanted to have some fresh air

and to look at the Ganges and the Himalayas, so he went outside. He was standing holding on to two disciples, shaking. He saw an old Parsee woman called Zalmataji. She was seated on the Ganges bank. Swamiji said, "Ask her why she is sitting there. It is very hot. Ask her if she has had her lunch. Give her something to eat."

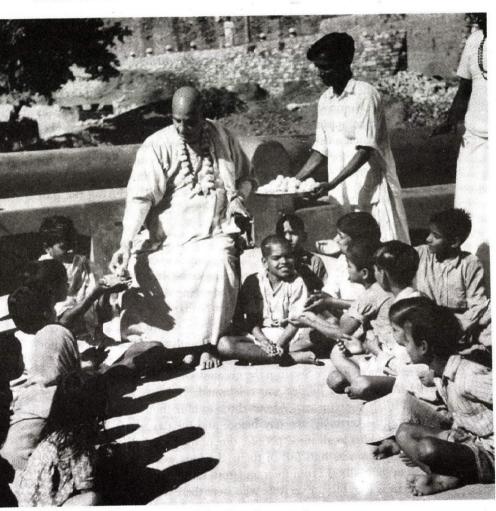


What is that love that worries about some old woman sitting in the hot sun? How could someone in such a physical condition think of the welfare and comfort of others! That love was not sentimentalism. Swamiji was whole, total - so there was no sentimentalism there. Not only his mind, heart and soul, but his whole personality was in every act, in every thought, word and deed. He was whole-hearted, whole-souled and totally in tune with the totality all the time. If he admonished a disciple it was only because that disciple happened to be part and parcel of him. The more distant the disciple was the more love he actually showed, but when he came a bit closer Swamiji wanted to burnish and polish him and it was only then that he appeared to be even slightly harsh, and that very, very rarely. When such a thing happened one could see that it was because of his extreme love for the disciple. Once, before he tackled one of his disciples who had erred in some way, he said, "I have been thinking about this for the past three days. I have not even slept during the past three days." Anyone else would have caught hold of this disciple and said, "Don't do this." But no, it might hurt the disciple. So, even when such a thing had to be said he delayed and delayed. He thought about it, meditated upon it and slept over it hoping that it would go away, that the other person might wake and discover his error. If nothing worked, he might say a word — and then shower the erring disciple with fruits and honey. Such fantastic love, which was not human but something divine, though it had all the human elements. He was affectionate, and his concern for the welfare of everybody was extraordinary, but that was not all — he created an ashram for the spiritual evolution of everybody.

The thing that gave Swamiji the greatest joy was distributing prasad. In 1947 his Diamond Jubilee was celebrated, and they had a surplus of laddus (Indian sweetmeats). About three to four thousand people ate to their fill on the birthday, the day before and the day after. After having distributed laddus to all these people, one of the rooms downstairs in the post office block was half full of them. Laddus were lying on the floor right up to the ceiling! From then on (from the 10th September for about ten days) he was in bliss. Everyone who went there was given two handfuls of laddus.

Swamiji was happiest when he could persuade people to eat a little more, and therefore one of his own Twenty Spiritual Instructions was ignored by him as soon as one entered the ashram. "Eat a little, drink a little," he used to sing, but you could only do so when you got back home! When he gave prasad — or some fruits or sweets — he would scoop them up with his huge hands and give to you. You had to eat immediately,

right in front of him! As he watched it gave him endless delight. He was thrilled to see about a couple of hundred people sit down and eat to their heart's content.



Swamiji loved to give prasad

Distributing prasad



In the beginning he used to be rather strict with regard to some observances, like fasting on ekadasi (eleventh day of the lunar fortnight), but later even these rules were relaxed. People brought fruits and sweets into his office and in no time the whole lot was distributed to those around him.

Once this turned into a rather tricky situation. A very good devotee, a South Indian lady from Bombay, had come to the ashram and had brought a very special sweet preparation that she knew Swamiji was fond of. She was an expert in preparing this and had obviously gone to much trouble. She knew of his habit of distributing to others and had taken that into account, but she was almost in tears when she saw him give the plate to one of his disciples to hand the plate around to everyone, and not taking any for himself. Her heart was sinking. He turned to tell the distributor, "You must also give a portion to her," when suddenly he noticed her expression. He said, "Oh Swami, wait. Bring it here, the rest is for me, I'm going to eat it. Don't give it away." He saw the lady's face begin to blossom, her cheeks became rosy. He put one bit in his mouth and somehow again the plate went round.

Swami Venkatesananda recalls the following incident:

It was a Sunday afternoon. Swamiji took only milk and fruit on Sunday. When I went to his kutir for some work, Swamiji at once

called for a basket of fruits. (Fruits were scarce in those days.) When his assistant hesitated, Swamiji briskly entered the kitchen himself and took up the basket. His assistant ran to help, and Swamiji came out followed by the assistant, basket in hand. Swamiji took out an orange and a banana. The assistant then murmured, "Swamiji, these oranges have been brought especially for you. They are very scarce at the moment. As you do not take any other fruit these days, they are reserved for you only. Please don't give oranges."

Swamiji looked at him — and then took one orange and handed it to me. Quickly he took another, for another disciple.

The assistant, not knowing what to do, lost his presence of mind and said: "Enough, enough. There are only four more."

"Four?" said Swamiji, "I won't take so many. If this orange is a rare thing, then the fish must also have their share." He took out another and instantly began peeling it. Then the offering began. Bit by bit the whole orange flew from his hand into the water. There was an expression of deep reverence on his face, and he watched with great satisfaction as the fish leapt out of the water to swallow each bit of orange as it touched the surface. The joy that he had when he shared was indescribable.



The fish get their share

Second only to the distribution of prasad, he delighted in the distribution of spiritual books. He sent them free to hundreds of people round the world. The parcels had to be registered and each one had to be touched and blessed by him, and the address checked by him. He used to say, "This is how I am handing the book over to the recipient, though that recipient is thousands of miles away."

Swamiji was always giving — and the giving sprang neither from vanity, nor from expectation of a return, but from pure divine love which took the form of service, of giving food, giving knowledge, and giving himself in every respect.

Non-violence was natural to Swamiji. He was incapable of wounding the feelings of others. Those who met him knew that his words were full of sweetness. Not a harsh word, not an unkind remark would escape his lips, for they were not in his heart at all. He was not able to entertain a thought of hatred or ill-feeling towards anyone. Nothing in the world could make him restless except the thought that perhaps a well-meant word, misunderstood by a disciple, might have hurt the latter's feelings. Once a guilty conscience was pricked by a noble piece of advice given by Swamiji; and the extent to which he went to reassure that devotee that he had only the highest opinion of him and that he lived only to serve him, was incredible.

No doubt his writings are full of admonitions, and his lectures, too, contained quite a few of them. However, in conversation he was always all-love, all-praise, all-encouragement.

"Never hurt others' feelings: be kind to all," was one of the most emphatic of his teachings, and there was no one who practised it to perfection more than he. In practice he disapproved even of righteous indignation, and in a case where other masters would demand and justify the use of the rod, he adopted none other than the methods that he himself had placed before us: "Serve, Love, Give, Meditate." Serve the person you wish to mould and reform; love him, meditate and pray for him. This is the path of non-violence.

In Swamiji non-violence became the positive virtue of cosmic love — love in thought, word and deed; love in everyday life, every minute, with every breath. It pervaded even the way he walked. He was a gigantic figure but the feet fell so softly, so lightly, no one could even hear. When he walked along the road, it was a delight just to stand and watch. In his step there was non-violence, in his foot-fall there was love, so that even if there was a dry leaf it wouldn't be crushed and even if he trod on ants they would not be injured — so soft were his movements.

The touchstone of one established in non-violence is that he cannot bear for a moment the sufferings of others, without literally running to relieve their pain. If Swamiji was taking a bath in the Ganges and a living insect came floating by, struggling for life, without a second thought he would take it into his palm and place it on the bank. Once he revealed to us, without the least trace of disgust on his face, "If a worm or an insect is struggling for life in faecal matter, I remove it and protect it." He would not allow others to harm any being on earth.

One hot day in 1955 an ashram monk tried to frighten away a monkey wanting to drink water from a mud-pot kept near the office for drinking purposes. Swamiji, on seeing this, called out: "Let it drink." The monk halted, and the monkey had its fill. "You cannot judge a man's heart from the big charity that he does and the huge hospital that he builds," commented Swamiji. "Watch for the little incidents. When you have brought water from the river and a monkey spoils it, how do you react in the first split second? What is the first thought that arises in your mind? What is the first impulse? That determines whether you are a saint or not."

Swamiji never imposed a teaching on others. In 1944, en route from Rishikesh to Bombay, he was passing through the Delhi railway station. Some young men who were working in Delhi at the time, and who were also conducting the Delhi branch of the Divine Life Society, went to see him at the railway station. Swamiji arrived there and was talking to them. He was bubbling with energy and enthusiasm. (One had to see him to understand and appreciate what a radiant personality meant.) Swamiji asked one married man, "How is your wife?"

"She's not here, Swamiji. She's gone home to Madras."

"Let her remain there," said Swamiji. "Lead a single life, an independent life. Let her stay there."

But this man was very fond of his wife, so he said, "But how long will I have to remain alone, Swamiji? I don't feel so very happy about it."

"Is that so? Oh, in that case immediately bring her back," Swamiji replied.

Once a fairly young man, already a mendicant, had come to the ashram. He had a wonderful flowing beard. He said to Swamiji, "I would like to stay here as your sannyasi-disciple."

"Then you will have to shave your head and beard," said Swamiji. He hesitatingly consented. Noticing this, Swamiji quickly added, "But you can grow it again immediately afterwards. The shaving is only for the initiation ceremony." He said what he wanted to say, but he watched very,

very carefully and cautiously to see if the person was responding to it joyously and happily, or whether he was responding because he felt that he was under some compulsion — in which case he would immediately pull back. It was a fantastic and remarkable thing to watch.

Once there was a misunderstanding between two of his disciples. One accused the other of insulting behaviour. Swamiji was resting on his easy chair when both of them arrived. The man who had misbehaved was standing near his feet, when suddenly he was overcome with some sort of sentiment or emotion, and lifting up his hands he said, "Swamiji, I take a vow..." He was going to say that thereafter he would not insult anyone.

"Oh stop it, stop it," said Swamiji, and would not let him complete the sentence. "How do you know what you will do later on? You take a vow now, and tomorrow if you break it you will be haunted for doing so. You will be upset, because not only will you have gone back to your bad habits, but you will have broken a vow also. Rather say: 'I will try to, by God's grace.' Resolves, yes; vows, no."

In Swamiji the fear of public criticism was conspicious by its absence. He said that one should not be arrogant and violate the laws of society, but yet should dare to do what one knows is right. Therefore when he did something it was done not in defiance of public opinion, but unafraid of public opinion; and when he did not do something it was because it was not right, not because he was afraid of public opinion. If it was not right, nothing in the world could persuade him to do it; and he would do anything he considered right, regardless of criticism.

He said "If you're afraid to do something, do it immediately, and thus get rid of the fear." Swamiji was always decently and tastefully dressed, but in early summer he would sit on the Ganges bank, clad in just a langoti, and rub himself with oil. He did not mind if people looked or laughed at him, that was their business, not his.

One day Swamiji said: "Some people here have a castor oil face. I don't like it. They must be cheerful, they must be laughing. They must radiate sunshine." He decided to have a laughing competition. He asked Swami Venkatesananda to laugh with him, and for the ashram photographer to take photos. When the office time was over they went down to the ghat. It was winter, so Swamiji was wearing an overcoat. He insisted that Swami Venkatesananda should also wear an overcoat. Table and chairs were brought and they sat in the chairs, and Swamiji said: "Well, let us laugh!" He cracked a joke, and they both began to laugh and laugh. The disciples who were present enjoyed it immensely, and the pilgrims passing by stared in amazement. Swamiji did not care what they

thought about it.



Even in the early days when he was living in Swarg Ashram, before the ashram was established, Swamiji was criticised by the swamis and holy men who used to say about him, "Oh, he is a householder swami though he wears the orange robe, because he handles money and he publishes all this literature. A swami should walk absolutely bare-handed. He shouldn't even carry his own water pot — a disciple should do it." They who had adopted this as their rule naturally criticised him, but he was not moved, nor did he react. In those days it was also unheard of for a swami to sing kirtan and to dance. A swami was not even allowed to bow down to others. It was Swamiji who started bowing down to all. He was criticised for this also, and people used to make fun of him, thinking he was a sort of performer, because they belonged to the other school. They felt that a holy man must be very grave and serious, all the time contemplating Brahman. But does one have to reject the world in order to get Brahman? That philosophy didn't appeal to Swamiji. However, one

of his critics later said, "In those days some of us used to criticise Swami Sivananda. But now we realise that he was right and we were wrong."

Swamiji called himself an 'overcoat' swami, as though to belittle himself, but when he presented an overcoat to one of his young disciples he would explain: "Why do you imagine that the overcoat is something other than a mere woollen blanket? They are wrapping themselves in a woollen blanket, clumsy and unsuited to active service. You are wearing the same blanket, cut and stitched so as to enable you to move about and work."

When a great nationalist who visited the ashram asked Swamiji: "Why do you wear foreign clothes?" Swamiji replied: "For a sadhu, a gunny bag, silk or cotton, whether Indian or foreign, is of no concern. I use with great joy the things given by sincere people; and," he continued, "wearing khaddar (homespun cloth) alone is not the sign of true patriotism. Spin the thread of viveka (discrimination), weave the cloth of shanti (peace), wear the khaddar of Brahma-jnana (God realisation) and become a true patriot."

He had no fear of contagion at all. Doctors would wash their hands in lysol even if they touched a patient's cheek, but he was totally unafraid. There was a man who had the most virulent type of small-pox — he died of it. Swamiji used to visit him and after visiting him he neither bathed nor changed his clothes. He used to visit even people dangerously ill from cholera and typhoid. He could handle them without any fear whatsoever. He never philosophised on these matters.

In the same way he had no fear of losing his reputation. He did what no other great man of his stature would do. He would nourish, clothe, house and look after people who would criticise him. If you were a sadhak with some spiritual aspiration which was worth preserving and promoting, or if you had talents and faculties which could be of some use to the public, he would allow you to stay in the ashram even if you criticised him directly to his face or behind his back. He might even glorify you, knowing that you were criticising him.

He never cared for public opinion. During a Kumbha Mela in Hardwar in the 1930's, someone started a rumour that Swami Sivananda was going to get married. The news was brought to the Ashram by one of Swamiji's own disciples, who was furious. When he brought this to Swamiji's notice, Swamiji said, "Alright, erect a platform for him! Let him say all this from the platform. People who hear this will come here to witness the marriage or to find out whether it is true or false, and I will give them *Twenty Instructions* and make them sing the Lord's names."

Swamiji's fearlessness was born of a spontaneous understanding of what was right. He neither picked an argument concerning his conviction, responded to a challenge, nor tried to convince his opponents. If a disciple felt he was right and Swamiji was wrong about how something should be done, Swamiji might say, 'Alright, do it your way''. Then later on the disciple might discover that he was wrong and Swamiji was right! If it was a stranger who tried to argue with him he didn't enter into the argument at all. He heard all that the other person had to say, very thoroughly and patiently, and then offered him a cup of tea, a few fruits and some books. What happened to the argument? He carried on doing what he knew was good with the fearlessness based on the understanding of oneness.

Being enlightened, Swamiji saw a concept as just a concept and did not regard it as the reality. For instance, he had the name 'Swami Sivananda'. He did not decline to be known by that name; but he did not allow the name to become bound up with his spiritual essence. When he was subjected to praise and censure he was able to distinguish the facts presented and the reference to the name and concept (which had only a functional reality) as not more than that, and therefore unrelated to his essence, or the truth. Two incidents illustrate this: In 1953 Swami Sivananda organised what was known as the Parliament of Religions. A number of learned scholars belonging to different faiths had been invited, and there were other people who had come merely to participate in the function. Obviously this was an occasion when the congregation was not made up entirely of disciples and devotees of Swami Sivananda, and the mood of the audience was a bit difficult to gauge. Because it was a cosmopolitan crowd, the proceedings were conducted mostly in English. except for one or two swamis who could not speak English (they spoke Hindi or Tamil or some other language).

On the second day one swami who was sitting on the platform passed a note to one of the organisers, "I want time to speak."

The organiser said: "No, there is no time."

Swamiji, who was also seated on the platform, watched this through the corner of his eye. The note was passed to him. He said, "Let him speak. I won't speak today."

This man stood up and grabbed the microphone so that no one could snatch it from him, and for ten minutes spewed forth nothing but criticism and abuse of Swami Sivananda. "He is living in North India, where the language is Hindi, yet he writes in English, speaks in English." (This was meant to be a parliament of religions, not a parliament of

languages, but this man was totally unconcerned with all that. He had come merely with the intention of attacking Swami Sivananda in public.) Swamiji kept saying "Very Good. Very Good." (in Hindi, of course!) Everyone else present there was getting very angry, but Swamiji was very calm, as if to say "That is your opinion, your path — go on." He did not want to justify himself or convince this man that because of his worldwide circulation of books he had to write them in English.

The expression on Swamiji's face as he heard this speech was a mixture of intense attention to what the swami had to say, and amusement. He took note of the facts that the swami presented, but personal attacks on 'Swami Sivananda' meant nothing, because to him it was only a functional name assumed for the time being, with no corresponding reality.

Even so, when one of his own disciples criticised him, complaining that the food was unbalanced and unhealthy, he listened with great attention and patience, and at the end requested an ashramite to cook specially for the complaining disciple. The personal remarks had no relevance to him. He was never upset when someone criticised Swami Sivananda, and he was never elated when someone sang the glories of Swami Sivananda; but in the censure and the praise there were hidden facts which he never allowed to pass unnoticed.

Religious Freedom

Swami Sivananda's philosophy and teachings were derived directly from his life. His life was his teaching, his teaching was his life. He did not contradict orthodox tradition. He seldom lectured, but he wrote considerably and his writings were mostly transmission of tradition. While transmitting the tradition he infused his own genius into it, especially in that he made the most difficult processes look simple, and the forbidding truth look attractive. There was a great sense of humour and simplicity both in his life and in his teaching.

Swamiji was a non-dual vedantin, belonging to what is known as the advaita cult, or monism. (Belief in God is not an essential part of the advaitin's doctrine.) The non-dual doctrine implies the total absence of all duality. Monism says, "There is only ONE. God, being omnipresent, is everywhere." When this doctrine is heard, the obvious question that arises in the mind is, "Then why do you want to worship God in a temple, in a church or in a synagogue? Why don't you worship God everywhere?" But the problem is that when you look at this paper you see it as paper, not as God, for the mind has been so conditioned that it is not

able to drop this conditioning! So, in practice, Swamiji had a rather interesting and remarkable attitude which was reflected in his own daily life. It was an extraordinary and beautiful combination of bhakti and inana. If something good happened to him he would say: "Oh, it is God's grace." If he performed a miracle he would say, "It is all God's grace." That is the bhakti attitude. If his legs were bothering him or if he had some misfortune, he would say, "All these things don't exist." That is the inana attitude.

In bhakti he adhered to certain rules and regulations as far as he could. For instance, he celebrated some festivals and on those occasions he gave the appearance of being an extremely orthodox brahmin. The way he bathed himself, dressed and put the tilak on his forehead gave the impression that he was a stickler to those rules and regulations. Yet he did not say that he was a bhakta and would therefore not study vedanta or meditate. He preferred the integral yoga approach — not merely this, not merely that. Both the bhakta and the monist, by each denying an aspect of yoga, are caught in the same ego illusion.

Swamiji never criticised either attitude. That was his genius. He tried to include all this, knowing that at a particular stage, to a person of that temperament, all is essential. He knew that all these are steps that lead to the same goal, and that if once in that idol worship you recognise or touch the core, you are bound to realise that that which you worship there in that image is in 'you' too. As it is said in the Upanishads, "That which shines in the sun, is also that which shines in me." His genius was in the blending of these seemingly conflicting doctrines.

When Swamiji first arrived in Rishikesh there were two completely opposite camps. One which said, "Forget all your vedanta, your enquiry and meditation. To have a vision of God is the highest goal. For this you must worship an idol." The other camp called them idolators, men who were unfit for meditation and who did not understand the sublime philosophy of the Upanishads. It was given to Swamiji to bring one group up and the other down a little, and this was done in a very beautiful and subtle way. Never once did he challenge anyone. If someone said, "God is in this idol," immediately he would agree, and add: "Come on, build a small shrine for your image. Worship there." Then someone else would come along and declare: "I don't believe in all this, Swamiji. I can raise my consciousness to the seventh plane." Swamiji would never argue with him. He was prepared to understand and did not condemn even the fanatic, because the fanatic sees something but is not mature enough to see that it is not the whole picture. He must be allowed to come to maturity in his own time. So, often Swamiji bowed down to satisfy even the fanatics.

He never bothered about what one's religious faith or belief was. He never interfered with that, nor suggested that one religion was valid and another false, nor that one was superior to another. To him one religion was as sacred as another, one name of the Lord as authentic as another. Bound by his love, Hindu and Muslim, Christian and Jew, Parsi and Buddhist lived like one family in his ashram. In the early days of the institution Swamiji did find traces of separatism in some of the orthodox Hindu inmates, but by the power of his personal example he set matters straight in no time. Once in 1938 when a Christian friend was taken by Swamiji to the Ashram's dining hall, the Hindus there stopped eating and walked away in the middle of their meal. On hearing of this Swamiji took the Christian inside the kitchen itself, spread a mat for him to sit and served the meals himself.

Ultimately religion is an adventure between you and God. Swamiji was not interested in imposing his doctrines, belief, faith or even his realisation on others. He was eager to listen to everyone; even to someone holding a diametrically opposite view. One of his most famous sayings was, "Break down the barriers that separate man from man." He said this hundreds of times whenever he lectured. He said; "As long as there is a feeling that you are completely and totally different from others, either because you are a Hindu and he is a Christian, or because you are an Indian and he is a European, or for any other reasons, the danger of hatred and destruction is also there. Realise that you are a human being. What your religion is, is your personal affair."

Amongst Hindus there are a few major cults (just as the Christians are subdivided into Catholics, Protestants, Seventh Day Adventists, etc). There are the Vaishnavas who regard Vishnu as God and the Saivites to whom Siva is God. Some of them are such great fanatics that they would not go to a place where the others go. A Saivite of that type would not enter your house if you had a picture of Krishna there, just as, perhaps, a very orthodox Jew may not enter a place where there is an idol.

Once a swami belonging to the Saivite order came to the ashram. The day before his arrival, Swami Sivananda said: "Tomorrow he is coming. Make sure that in the prayer hall there are no pictures of Rama or Krishna. Put the Siva picture there. Only sing Jaya Ganesha jaya Ganesha jaya Ganesha pahimam, Sri Ganesha Sri Ganesha Sri Ganesha rakshamam. You can repeat it a few times, then Om namah Sivaya, Om namah Sivaya. No Hare Rama Hare Krishna."

One scholarly and very devout orthodox Muslim used to come to the ashram. As an orthodox Muslim he would not do certain things, while there were certain other things he had to do. Swamiji instructed his disciples thus: "He will be doing namaz (Muslim prayer) now, so please don't disturb him." "He doesn't like this, don't give it to him. He likes that, let him have it. Keep a prayer mat in his room." He had great respect for the other person's religious practices.

Swamiji had faith in all these, but he himself practised what he wanted to practise. He adopted his own mode of life, undisturbed by what others said. He never challenged anyone, nor forced anyone to go against his own conscience. In the ashram his own disciples held widely divergent doctrines and views, but they were all loved and respected by him. This seems to be the essence of the realisation that God is omnipresent. Not the word, not the concept, but the realisation of the omnipresence of God. This realisation lived as Swami Sivananda.

Attitude to Money

Swamiji's spontaneous, overwhelming, unquestioning generosity had no motives at all. Where he found some need, he gave and never referred back to it.

It was a headache to the secretary and the treasurer of the ashram to have a person like Swami Sivananda as the head. He just went on giving, giving, giving — he did not seem to have any notion where the money came from or where it went. But, he knew, though they thought he did not. He was aware all the time that the source is also the goal. "It comes from Him and returns to Him. We are merely channels. We think we are running this institution, this ashram, but we are only trustees," he once said.

At least once a year the ashram experienced a financial crisis. Swamiji would seriously consider the position and say: "We will be very careful. We won't admit any new aspirants into the ashram." Usually this only lasted a few days. Soon a poor man would walk in without even a change of clothes, asking to stay at the ashram. Swamiji would say: "Yes, yes... better let him stay. Where else will he go? Do not worry about expenses. Every man brings his own ration with him. Before God sends him here, God has already delivered to the kitchen the food supply that he will need."

These were not just words; if you looked into his face, into his eyes, you knew he was speaking the truth. In him there was no doubt at all, there was no questioning. In him this truth lived. He knew that God's

will alone prevailed. "If we are going to be bankrupt, we will be bankrupt in any case. There is nothing to worry about," he said. The secretary submitted and then the flood-gates were open again — otherwise the next financial crisis would not have come so soon!

Another time there was a classical tragedy. A young man had joined the ashram. He was a ceaseless and untiring worker, brilliant in every way. He had captured Swamiji's heart. Swamiji loved him and admired him, and took him into his confidence. He made him nearly the all-in-all. He was the postmaster, the treasurer, and almost the secretary too, unofficially. He was the cashier, and on top of all this he was also doing some literary work for Swamiji. He was such a dynamic personality. But it was only half an hour after he had left the ashram one day that it was discovered that he had embezzled some money, we didn't know how much! He was the cashier and the postmaster, so nobody could really estimate to what extent the ashram had been robbed. All we knew was that there was not a single cent in the entire ashram.

The news spread to Rishikesh. Once again, the grocers very politely told the secretary, "For some time it is better to pay cash for whatever you take," because the ashram owed a lot to them already. That was the worst calamity in the ashram's life. And what did Swamiji do? Absolutely nothing. He was enjoying the whole thing as a big joke: "How was it possible for him to cheat us like this? He was such a good man! He must be a genius." Two things he went on repeating: "He must have been a genius to do this," and, "but he did a lot of work." He added, "We must have owed him some money. But he could have asked me, I'd have given him."

In 1946 a businessman came to the ashram from South India. He knew that Swamiji was very fond of dissemination of spiritual knowledge and that the shelves were full of books which had been printed and published by the ashram, so he said to Swamiji, "I can distribute and market all your books in South India." He took a large consignment. Later when the secretary wrote to the address given by the businessman the letter was returned, 'No such address'! The secretary was amazed. Swamiji said, "If you think that you are the self of the man who cheated you, you won't be disappointed. If God is one and omnipresent, what is stealing? Stealing is only transferring the object from the right hand to the left hand. If you see your own self in that other person, not only would you not feel sorry, but you may even feel happy." Nothing more was said about the whole affair.

One night the ashram temple was broken into, although a number of

people were sleeping on the covered verandah which went around the four sides of the temple. The silver pot and other silver vessels were missing. The priest who had discovered the loss reported the theft to Swamiji. Instead of getting serious, he was curious. "People were sleeping right there at the time when the theft was taking place?" Then he burst out laughing, "He must be a very clever thief. If he is found, I'll award him the title 'Chora Shikamani'." (Which means an expert in stealing.)

Once a destitute blind boy came to the ashram. Swamiji took him in and lavished love upon him. The boy, however, ran away from the ashram with a sighted person, taking a harmonium besides! Swamiji merely shrugged off the incident. To serve the Lord in the blind boy was his sacred duty and pleasure. "What I did for the Lord in him has no connection at all with what he did to me," said Swamiji. "The loss of the instrument is the working out of my karma. The boy has in fact not cheated me, but helped me by relieving me of my karma." He called it 'gupta dann' (hidden charity), in which the receiver saved you from even the trouble of giving it! He needed it — he took it. That was all. Swamiji made it look as if there was no theft.

Once we decided that instead of Swami Sivananda, he should have been called Swami Givananda — he who rejoices in giving. He knew that the supply came from the Source, and to the Source it returned. Material considerations of accounting did not bother him at all. He proved in his own life that in such generosity there was no bankruptcy. He used to say very often, "Giving has never made a person poor."

Once he was scheduled to meet a multi-millionaire who was a fanatical Hindu. All he wanted to hear was these few words: "The Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) alone is the truth." While Swamiji was being escorted to this meeting, the secretary of this millionaire dropped a few hints that the wealthy man could be of great help in Swamiji's mission. Swamiji was gloriously received by this rich man, who asked the standard question, "Swamiji what do you think of Islam? Is it also a religion?"

"Oh yes, yes."

"The Koran is also the word of God?" asked the millionaire.

"Yes, yes," replied Swamiji. He returned with a plate of fruits, most of which he distributed there itself. Sivananda was not for sale!

Health Redefined

Swamiji had diabetes from the age of about thirty-five and lumbago later on, and there were other problems; but his face was radiant and

shining, his eyes sparkling with energy and humour and his every movement full of love and wisdom. His mind was supremely alert even when the body was weak.

Even physically he was extremely attractive. A robust figure only added to his charm and to his majesty. The skin was clear and sparklingly well maintained. His clothes were always spotlessly clean. Even when his body was ill there was an extraordinary glow of radiance on his face.

Once, when he was down with typhoid, his body had been so weakened that on one or two occasions we thought he would pass away. Even then his eyes were sparkling and his face was radiant. He had been confined to his room for about three weeks and wanted to see the sun and the Ganges. Slowly we brought him outside and he lay in his favourite chair. It looked as though there was nothing wrong with him. He was beautiful to look at and he was laughing, joking and talking to people. After about an hour or so he said, "Alright, let me go back to bed. Wait, I'll try and get up by myself." He planted both his feet on the floor and, holding the arms of the chair, tried to lift himself off... and collapsed — luckily, back into the chair itself. As he was collapsing he started to laugh, "Hm, the legs have lost their strength." Not 'I', but 'the legs'.

The way he reacted to the many ailments and illnesses that assailed his body can be used as a revolutionary redefinition of the whole concept of health. Health is a state of mind, a state of inner well-being which enables you to function, to do your work without moaning and grumbling. Health is not just the body being declared medically free from illness. Swamiji didn't mind taking medicines at all; on the other hand, there was a whole plate full of them after lunch. His philosophy was that if you can take food for the body, you can also take some other thing called medicine.

Never once through all his illnesses did he moan or groan, and when doctors entered his room he would ask, "And how is your health?" Likewise, when some of the ashram swamis went to see him he was only concerned about *their* health, and requested them to look after themselves. Lying in bed he used to continue his work marvellously well. He was tremendously alert and there was always a state of inner well-being. Sometimes the body functioned 100 per cent, sometimes only 80 per cent or 70 per cent, and he was prepared to adjust.

Swamiji was careful with his eyesight. His voice was also very important to him. He had a ringing bell-metal voice throughout his life and he had his own special exercises for it. He was careful with his teeth. He said: "If you don't have proper teeth, you can't speak well and you

can't eat well." He would adopt any measure that any doctor might recommend to keep them clean. Brushing his teeth in the morning was a big ceremony with him. He did not want to lose the instruments with which he served humanity.



Pointing to the huge overcoat that muffled up his substantial girth in the 1950's (it was the time of early winter and the days were becoming chilly), he once said with a chuckle, "I doubtless appear like a fashionable man in this attire. But then I do not care what the world says about me. All these things are necessary if you are to preserve the body in good condition to further the good work that is now being done through it. Whatever you have, you must give to the world, or else life is not worth the name. To do this you have to keep both physical and mental ability intact. I will only invite lumbago if I expose my back to the chill at this period of my life. When racked by pain in the back, of what use can one be either to himself or to the world? The only gainer will be the patent medicine manufacturer.

"Any new thing I learn, then and there I proclaim it to humanity. I can lose no time in benefiting others even in the least detail. So I have to be ever on the run. How can I afford to jeopardise the condition of the vehicle in the name of any rigid form of prehistoric asceticism and mortification? You can keep yourself in a fit condition for service only by avoiding extremes, while at the same time making earnest endeavour to steer clear of all luxury and indulgence."

In summer Swamiji loved to swim. He had a bald head, and he would sit on the Ganges bank, naked except for a loin cloth, and rub his body and head nicely with oil before getting into the water. He had his own health hints and sunbathing ideas. Not only must the skin be exposed to the sun, but the tongue and teeth also. He would sit there, right in the open, smiling and grinning at the sun, sticking his tongue out, bathing them in the sunlight.

He was also fond of gymnastics and sports, and he loved walking. Even as a school student he was so efficient at gymnastics that his instructor often made him teach the class. In the early years in the ashram he used to tie up his dhoti and run around the Bhajan Hall. With an old tennis racket and a ball, he also used to play by himself against the wall. He was not self-conscious at all. He once wrote: "Householders too, who have to lead a sedentary life on account of their profession or occupation, should run at least a few times around their own compounds or even inside their rooms. A little deep breathing frequently in the course of one's daily activities and the knack of snatching a few minutes of relaxation in the midst of heavy work are essential to maintain enduring health and youthful energy."

In later years he observed: "Even though my asceticism has shattered my constitution and brought heavy reactions upon me, yet I have not allowed my body to go down under the onslaught. It is my exercise that has sustained me. Even now I exercise regularly without missing a single day. I do not allow the reaction to overpower me. Though sometimes I feel my head reel when I rise to my feet, I master it, run up the hill, do my sirshasana, etc., and rush to work again. I burst all bonds and thunder forth in my speeches spontaneously and forcefully, and only stop when I feel exhausted. I cannot be stopped in the middle. I myself feel quite surprised as to how I can do it. While I am at times too weak to stand, the instant I get up vigour rushes into me. God alone knows from whence this power gushes. The energy is not mine. I feel I am an instrument only. But this much I know, that it is the systematic exercise that I do that has kept the physical instrument in a fit state to be a channel of such sudden

flow of energy."

Swamiji's mind was alert, vigilant, energetic, powerful. He refused to give in to the whims of the body. When the legs would hardly move on account of lumbago and rheumatism, he still insisted: "I'll come out. I'll work in the office."

He had to climb steps to get to the office. It was alright for some time when the body was in good health, but when he had lumbago and could not walk so easily he asked for a long stick, with the help of which he used to climb those stairs. Then, when even this was not sufficient, he would hold somebody's hand. But the body was not excused; what had to be done, had to be done. One day there was no one nearby, so he literally bent down and crawled up. There was absolutely no despair, no excuses, no moaning at all; there wasn't even self-consciousness.

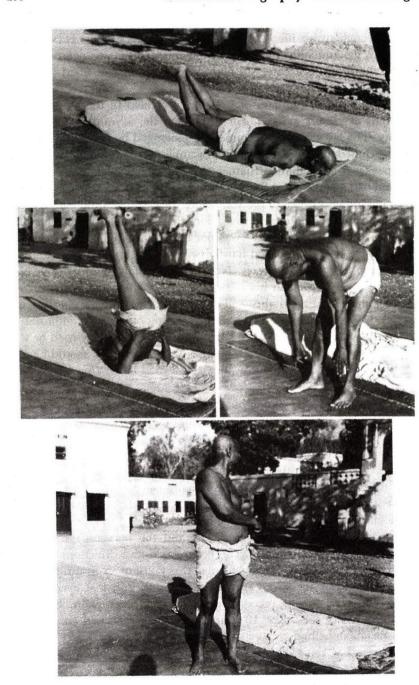


What is that state of mind that is able to overcome physical ailments? What is that state of mind which sees that though the body is weakening, it is still capable of some functions which it should be made to perform cheerfully, whole-heartedly, brilliantly? That state of mind is called health, where even an ageing body cannot dampen or weaken the inner spirit even for a moment. He had this sense of spiritual well-being at all

times throughout his life. One might attribute this to what is popularly known as the kundalini shakti being awakened. This was never discussed. From within him came an abundance of energy. It filled him and flowed from him constantly.

In 1953 the Parliament of Religions was held in the ashram, and hundreds of visitors arrived. For three days the ashram was a hive of activity. The last day's programme was prolonged by Swami Sivananda and concluded after midnight, when Swamiji retired. One of the visitors, the Speaker of the Indian Parliament, wanted to leave very early the next day and had asked Swami Sivananda, "Is it possible for me to have your darshan (audience), just to see you before I leave?" Swamiji had agreed. The Speaker called on him at five o'clock that morning. We could hardly keep our eyes open, but there was not a trace of fatigue on the face of Swamiji. He had gone to bed hardly two or three hours before, and yet was able to talk and chat freely. No matter how hard he worked or how much he worked (even in his sixties), he always had such an attractive glowing and sparkling vitality and effervescent energy, both physical and mental, which filled him and overflowed, filling others with enthusiasm. Swami Paramananda once said: "If he just walks along any road he will gather a crowd around him. It is not necessary that there should be any advance propaganda. Let him walk along a road in London and he will attract a crowd."

Swamiji ascribed this continuously bursting inner fountain of energy to the regular practice of asanas, pranayama and meditation; and the repetition of the Lord's name; but particularly to pranayama. He realised that pranayama (not merely breathing exercises) has a direct effect on the nervous system and on the mind. It promotes an inner state of well-being quite different from what we conventionally call health. This endowed him with a phenomenal memory and a marvellous capacity to do ashtavadhana (doing eight things simultaneously). Pranayama purifies the nadis (the subtle energy channels) and the nervous system, and strengthens the mind. His powerful brain could give directions for work to a hundred people at the same time. Every visitor to Swamiji's room knew that he was registered in Swamiji's mind, and that even after a decade he would still be recognised should they meet again. He could remember a face for 30 or 40 years, even if the face had changed. If someone whom he had seen as a little girl went back after thirty years he would remark: "You look like a little girl I saw at..." and she would say. "Yes, Swamiji that was me."



Swamiji was regular in his practise of asanas

There are instances galore. During the All-India Tour he met the then Chief Minister of Mysore, Sri K.C. Reddy, at Bangalore airport, and conversed with him for a few minutes. Two years later Mr. Reddy came to Rishikesh and Swamiji recognised him instantly, though Mr. Reddy was dressed differently. Sadhu Murugadas visited the ashram in 1940 and sang beautiful bhajans. Eight years later he visited again and gave another wonderful programme. When he was about to conclude Swamiji reminded him: "What about the beautiful prayer with which you concluded last time — Asato Ma Sat Gamaya?"

Swamiji was a medical doctor and as such it was inevitable that he should have seen the futility of pampering the body. He had no illusions concerning human life. He knew that the physical energy supply is limited; that there comes a time when the body ages and the energy level falls.

Once he was walking up a flight of steps to go to the temple, and about half way he sat down on a step. Just then a young boy, who was also living in the ashram, came running down the steps. Swamiji looked at him, full of admiration. "Hah, he is full of energy. I also used to be like that once, but now for this body it is not possible."

He once said: "If I had known in Malaya that I would be engaged later in this kind of activity, which benefits not only one patient or one neighbourhood but everyone in the world, I would have conserved a little more energy. I would have taken better care of myself and would not have spent so much energy." He knew that because the energy supply is limited, it has to be spent fruitfully, intelligently and wisely, and that death is inevitable however long you live; therefore he was not fond of health for its own sake. He would not have wanted to live in that body if it was not of some service to others. Every moment of his life the body was not just cajoled, but whipped into service. It was looked after very well, and work was extracted from it also very well.

DEVOTION

Satsang

One of the most important sadhanas is satsang. In 1924 when Swamiji entered Rishikesh he had only just become a swami and was still a mendicant and almost unknown. He was about forty and as such was fairly junior to the other great holy men in Swarg Ashram, but as a bold and practical idealist he discovered even then that satsang was the fan to keep alive the fire of God-love in the spiritual aspirant's heart, so he worked to bring all these holy men together in satsang. He suggested: "Why don't you all get together on the same platform so that all the people may see you and listen to you." He fixed up a platform and spread the mats and cushions for the holy men to sit upon, but he kept in the background.

When he moved over to the present ashram site the first thing he did was to ensure that there was satsang every night in the ashram — summer, winter or monsoon. In winter it was held up on the hill where it was less cold, and in summer on the bank of the Ganges where it was cooler.

Swamiji was the 'sat' in the satsang, or, the divinity whose company was sought by those who gathered there. He was a holy man and he didn't need anybody's company; and yet, walking with the aid of a long stick, he used to go to the satsang every night. When the body didn't allow even that he used to hold the shoulders of two people and walk to satsang. Nobody could prevent him. Later, when he was not quite sure whether the legs could even sustain his body, he said, "Oh, the legs are a bit wobbly. Bring me a wheelchair". He who but a few years before was in wonderful



health, was not at all reluctant to be wheeled to the satsang. When he could no longer sit on the floor he sat in an easy chair. When the body was ill and weak he couldn't even sit, so he would lie down on the floor — but he would not miss satsang.

Once a visitor missed out on satsang on the second or third day. Swamiji noticed it and asked him next day why he hadn't come to satsang. The visitor replied that he was not very well. Swamiji said, "That is the reason why you should come to satsang. If you are not well you must definitely come to satsang. You will get well there."

Swamiji's satsang was unique in many ways. It beautifully combined songs in praise of the Lord, chanting His names, music, study of scriptures and discourses, etc. In the beginning it was very austere, and even cymbals were not allowed. There were no electric lights and even other lamps were scarce. It was usually conducted in almost complete darkness, except for a little lamp at the altar and a hurricane lamp for reading purposes. Swamiji was always looking for a sincere expression of love and

devotion. He did not encourage hypocrisy. He used to say that when you chant kirtans you should sit with closed eyes, feeling that you are singing to God, not to entertain an audience. When you sing like that you are not worried about your voice, your throat condition or your expertise in singing, but you sing with devotion.

In the early days there were only about ten or fifteen ashramites and perhaps ten visitors, who all sat in two rows. The satsang started with opening prayers (which were later greatly expanded) and then the lamp was passed to the first person sitting on Swamiji's left, who would read a chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, with or without translation. As soon as that was finished that person would lead in chanting a kirtan and then the lantern would be pushed to the next person, who would read from some other scripture. This person would also lead the next kirtan and so it would go round.

Everyone had to lead in singing a kirtan, it was not enough to sing in chorus. Swamiji would not accept any excuse or explanation. He pointed out that shyness was an obstacle to spiritual progress. One young lady who had come from South Africa tried to avoid singing, saying: "Swamiji, my throat is not very well today. I am a little hoarse". Swamiji immediately sent for some bitter cough mixture. She didn't know whether to take it or not!

Nobody was exempt, because it was in satsang that one found one's foothold in yoga, and found out where one was slipping and how to steady oneself.

When everyone had finished chanting Swamiji would conclude with the maha mrityunjaya mantra. The satsang concluded with arati and the following peace chants:

Om sarvesam svasti bhavatu, sarvesam santir bhavatu, Sarvesam purnam bhavatu, sarvesam mangalam bhavatu, Sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah, Sarve bhadrani pasyantu, ma kaschit duhkha-bhag-bhavet.

Asato ma sat gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, Mrityor ma amrtam gamaya.

Om purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudacyate, Purnasya purnamadaya purnameva vasisyate, Om santih santih santih. May all be blessed with well-being, auspiciousness, peace and fullness.

May all be happy and free from illness. May all see only good: and may no ill befall anyone.

O Lord, lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light and from death to Immortality.

The Lord is full; the creation is also full. The latter has come out of the Lord, and yet the Lord is ever full. Om Peace, peace, peace.

After this Swamiji would walk away very quietly to his kutir so that the profound thoughts and ideas from the scriptures would still be fresh and ringing in the hearts and minds of those who had attended, as they went to bed.

This was the basic structure of his satsang.

Swamiji also encouraged people to have satsang in their own homes, perhaps with a few neighbours, choosing their own scriptures.

Songs

Swamiji once said that when he went to Rishikesh all that he wanted to do was to sit under a tree, to sing God's names and do japa. He was so fond of kirtan that there was not a single function which commenced without it. Every occasion demanded the singing of God's names. If someone was sick, dying, born or married; for laying a foundation-stone or pulling a building down, he sang the mahamantra:

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

which was his favourite. He was so fond of this mantra that he instituted the continuous chanting of it at the ashram on the 3rd December 1943, and this chanting has been going on continuously day and night ever since, generating an all-powerful spiritual current, invisibly helping all aspirants in their spiritual endeavour.

Swamiji encouraged all organisers of conferences and other functions and celebrations of importance to arrange for the continuous chanting of this mantra to synchronise with the event, and assured them of success in their venture.

Though the mahamantra is more or less a common feature at the ashram gatherings, he had his own special songs for invoking various deities each day of the week.

Swamiji wrote many songs which are philosophically inspiring. They contain the very essence of his teachings. Here is one of them:

Sunaja sunaja sunaja Krishna
Tu-gita-wala jnana sunaja Krishna.
Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise,
Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate.
Enquire 'Who am I?', know the Self and be free.
Adapt, adjust, accommodate,
Bear insult, bear injury, (This is) highest sadhana.
Be honest, be sincere, be truthful,
Be patient, be obedient, be tolerant.
Be gentle, be humble, be noble,
Be bold, be pure, be wise, be virtuous.
Be still, be quiet, know thy self.
Seek, find, enter and rest,
Enquire, discover and recover.
This is the way, this is the truth, this is life divine.

A remarkable characteristic of Swamiji's songs is that they are non-dualistic at base. They vividly portray his ultimate realisation of Godhead and his catholic understanding that the Lord is thought of and worshipped in an infinite variety of ways by people of different temperaments and spiritual equipment.

Prayer

Another form of service which Swamiji strongly recommended was prayer. Prayer was not so much praying for yourself (not even for your salvation) but it was recommended as a form of service, of charity. So to pray — not only for the peace of all in a general sense, but in a specific sense — was part of his life.

Swamiji always insisted on his disciples praying for all absolutely unselfishly. At satsang and other times he would often ask all to pray for someone who was sick, or for the peace of the departed soul of someone who had died, or for someone whose birthday it was. Then he himself would conduct the congregational chanting of the Lord's names and conclude with a two minute silent meditation and prayer. This prayer has

literally wrought miracles.

In the early days another service was performed by the ashram. Swamiji had great faith in the maha mrityunjaya mantra:

Om tryambakam yajamahe sugandhim pustivardhanam, urvarukamiva bandhanan mrityor muksiya mamritat.

We worship the Lord who promotes health and strength. May he liberate us from death.

This wards off all kinds of accidents, bestows health and long life and ultimately confers immortality. This prayer was not confined to human beings. An injured dog or monkey would invariably invoke from him the maha-mrityunjaya mantra. Even a dead lizard on Swamiji's path would earn this mantra for the peace of the soul. To Swamiji all beings were equal and prayer was always universal.

Devotees used to write to him saying that they (or a member of their family) were sick and asking him to conduct mrityunjaya-mantra japa. The disciples were all made to participate in this. There were only about ten in those days, and each was allotted so many malas a day. The secretary kept an account of how many malas of the mantra were done while remembering this person. Even if the disciple had not seen him he had the name at the back of his mind, and thinking of the person and praying for his welfare he did japa of the mrityunjaya mantra on the Ganges bank.

This was another form of service that Swamiji used to encourage. In this all the vital elements of sadhana were immediately introduced. Doing japa, sitting on the Ganges bank for about one hour is sadhana, and at the same time it was a service to the other man, a service to humanity. The disciple gained nothing out of it and so was taught how to be unselfish. An unselfish service covering also one's own sadhana is a beautiful blend.

This used to be very regularly performed. When the required number had been completed there used to be a havan (fire ceremony), feeding of the poor people and so on, and the ritual came to a conclusion. By that time someone else might have asked for the mantra-japa again; so it continued.

Swamiji said: "When you pray for the health, happiness and peace of others you become a channel for the flow of divine grace. The water that is collected in a pond may become dirty sometime or the other, but the water that flows along a pipeline never does, because it is flowing all the time. So, if one continues to be the channel for the flow of divine grace, one's heart is always pure and filled with divine grace."



Concluding ceremonies

There is nothing new in this, people have offered prayers for thousands of years, but it is in this combination that Swamiji's genius lay. In combining what is essentially regarded as a bhakti practice with a tremendous ideal of unselfish service, he performed a miracle. Japa and prayer were vitally important to him, not only for personal evolution but as an act of service of humanity.

Though as the natural 'fruit' of Swamiji's bhakti yoga practices he enjoyed the visions of divinities and sages, though his prayers for the sick healed them and his prayers for the afflicted removed their afflictions and even altered the destinies of devotees, his utter egolessness was the supreme manifestation of bhakti.

Swamiji asked us to make our entire life one long prayer, by living for the realisation of God and for the service of humanity. Until prayer became habitual, he exhorted us to take the help of any prop available. Temples, idols, images, pictures, saints and sacred books etc., all should be made the best use of to keep up the constant current of prayer. Pictures of gods and goddesses were hung in the office and the prayer hall. He did not hang a picture up with the best of intentions and then forget all about it, as most of us do, but wove their existence into his daily life. As soon as he entered the office he would glance at them all. A moment's silent prayer

was offered before he commenced his work. When one task was completed and the next job was about to begin, or when one visitor left and the next was about to enter, he would lean back in his chair, close one eye and with the other just throw a glance at one of the pictures of God. Thus the contact with the Absolute was continuously kept up.

He was so serious about this practice that if one picture was disturbed or removed he would at once notice it and have it restored. What need had he, who was consciously rooted forever in Brahmic consciousness, to resort to these props of devotion? Only to set an example for others to follow.

This is the beautiful and soul-elevating *Universal Prayer* which he composed:

O adorable Lord of mercy and love

Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.

Thou art sat-chid-ananda (existence, knowledge, bliss absolute), Thou art omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient;

Thou art the Indweller of all beings.

Grant us an understanding heart, equal vision, balanced mind, faith devotion and wisdom.

Grant us inner spiritual strength to resist temptations and to control the mind.

Free us from lust, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy,

Fill our hearts with divine virtues.

Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms,

Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms,

Let us ever remember Thee,

Let us ever sing Thy glories,

Let Thy name be ever on our lips.

Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.

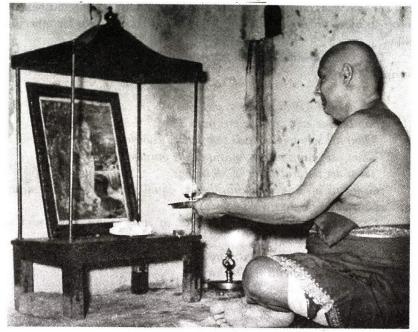
Om Santih Santih Santih.

Worship

Right from his Swarg Ashram days when he was a mendicant ascetic till the last moment of his physical life, Swamiji was not only a believer, but a firm practitioner of what is called idol worship. Sometimes he used a picture of Siva, but most often he used the picture of Lord Krishna with flute in hand.

Once Swamiji referred to this picture, saying, "The artist who painted it must have had a vision of Krishna. It is highly inspiring." This

picture was kept in his own puja (worship) room all the time, and there was not a single day when his body could move from the bed that the ritualistic worship of that picture was neglected. When he could not bend or sit on the floor, the altar was raised. Every day as soon as he had had his bath he would go and offer a flower at the feet of Krishna, take a lamp and do arati. He once said that he did not know very many mantras, but whatever few he knew he used in the worship.



The teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* was embodied in Swamiji's life. There is one verse which has the following meaning: 'Whatever My devotee offers to Me with love, even if it is only a leaf (patram), a flower (pushpam) or a little water, all that I accept with great relish.' When Swamiji had some charity to perform, or some fruit, money or clothes to give to his own disciples, he would repeat the first two words of this verse (patram puspam), indicating "I am the devotee, you are my God, and I am offering this which is patram pushpam. Please accept it."

Such worship can be performed to an image (murthi-puja), to the Lord seated in one's heart (manasic puja), or to the omnipresent Being who dwells in all beings (para puja). Swamiji did not neglect any of these. The whole world was to him the manifestation of the Lord, and he lived every minute of his life in this consciousness. Greeting the sun in the

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morning, he would offer mental worship to it, repeating "Om suryaya namah," (the mantra for propitiating the sun god) and mentally offer incense, lights, food and flowers in the order in which they would come to his heart. Sitting on the bank of the Ganges, gazing at the sparkling divine water, he would offer mental worship to the river with milk, flowers etc.

On no account would he take his afternoon meal without first offering formal and ceremonial worship to the Lord at the small shrine in his own cottage. In only this one item of his daily routine did he claim and insist upon privacy — perhaps only to illustrate his own precept that you should pray to the Lord in secret for the sake of obtaining His grace, and not ring the bells and sound the gong in order to attract public attention and earn appreciation for your 'marvellous devotion'. He attached no value whatsoever to ostentation. Only once did one of his personal attendants by chance witness the moving spectacle of Swamiji lying down on the ground in full prostration before the deity. There was nothing mechanical in this worship or prostration. It was symbolic of total self-surrender, and in his case the symbolism was real and whole-hearted.

To Swamiji the deity whom he worshipped, either mentally or physically, was more real than the things that are solid realities to us. He often went to the ashram's Vishwanath temple for the puja. When he offered some bael leaves and looked at the little bull and the Siva-lingam there, it was clear that he did not treat them as statues at all. When he looked at the beautiful Krishna statue the expression on his face was much the same as that on ours when we meet and greet a life-long beloved friend. You could see it in the eyes. It was a beautiful thing to watch, it was indescribable. He used to say that when you worship an idol (or picture) it remains an idol, but your devotion goes to God. To him the idols in the temple were not mere statues, but the living Presence.

On no account would Swamiji let us confine our devotional practices to the shrine only. Worship in a shrine is no doubt the necessary initial training ground, but the aim of this was to treat the entire universe as the abode of God and every being in it as the Lord Himself.

At Swamiji's insistence, special varieties of worship were instituted at the ashram — like the worship of the virgins during Navaratri, worship of scavengers on Gandhi's birthday; and sacred Guru Purnima day when worship is offered to Sri Vyasa, who commenced writing the *Brahma Sutras* on that day.

On the days when worship was offered to his own feet by some ardent disciple, he would himself go round, flowers in hand, individually wor-

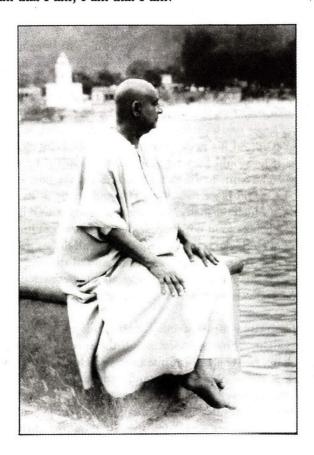
shipping all the devotees who had worshipped him. Those who intently observed the mood reflected on his face and the expression of devotion in his eyes would realise that to him every devotee standing before him was a veritable manifestation of God.

On Sivaratri (a day sacred to Lord Siva) he wouldn't eat at all and would keep awake the whole night while worship in the temple was going on. He would sit next to the pillar on the left near the temple and while all the others were shouting he would chant very quietly, "Om namah Sivayah" with closed eyes and a deep voice. (Only he could do that — others would go off to sleep!) He was the only one who managed to sit there continuously, and he hardly ever got up from that seat from 9 p.m. to about 3 a.m. Devotees were engaged in the all-night worship of Lord Siva, which consists of pujas (worship) performed four times during the night, every three hours. On the temple verandah continuous chanting of the holy five-syllabled formula of Lord Siva (Om namah Sivayah) went on. After the last session flowers were offered to the Lord and the devotees filed into the sanctum sanctorum, devoutly placing the sacred bael leaves on the Siva-lingam (the symbol or idol of Lord Siva).

Some threw the bael leaves on the Lingam; some half sleepily allowed the leaves to slip from their hands. Last of all Swamiji, bael leaves in hand, his radiant face shining with an extraordinary light, would let a few leaves drop at the foot of the holy bull, Nandi — very softly, sweetly and devoutly seeking his permission to worship the Lord. Once when he gazed at the Lingam before offering the bael leaves he neither prayed, recited hymns, nor repeated the Lord's name aloud, but his eyes spoke to the Lingam. For him it was a living presence; such tenderness and gentleness characterised every movement. Right then, in the twinkling of an eye and unnoticed by anyone else, he turned around and worshipped the worshippers with the flowers, as if to say, "God is not only there. He is everywhere."

Swamiji was the greatest and perhaps the only recent exemplar of vibhuti yoga (the yoga dealing with the glories and the manifestations of the Lord) as described in the 10th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. Those who heard his inspiring lectures either during his All-India Tour or on important occasions at the ashram itself, could not have failed to notice how he laid the greatest emphasis on this practice. He exalted it, putting it on a par with raja, bhakti, karma and jnana yogas. It is a dynamic jnana-bhakti yoga. To the list of vibhutis (glories or manifestations) given by Lord Krishna in the Gita, Swamiji added quite a few of his own. He sang the Song of Vibhuti Yoga.

Soham soham soham
Om om om om om om om om om
I am neither mind nor body, immortal self I am.
I am witness of three states, I am knowledge absolute.
I am fragrance in jasmine, beauty in flowers.
I am coolness in the ice, flavour in coffee.
I am greenness in leaf, hue in the rainbow,
I am taste bud in the tongue, essence in orange.
I am mind of all minds, prana of all pranas,
I am soul of all souls, self of all selves.
I am atman in all beings, apple of all eyes,
I am sun of all suns, light of all lights, etc.
I am that I am, I am that I am.
I am that I am, I am that I am.



How did Swamiji practise vibhuti yoga? Everything reminded him of the manifestation of God. When he came out of his room and saw the Ganges he would remember Krishna, saying, "I am Ganga among rivers," and while gazing at the Himalayas, "Among the immovables, I am the Himalayas." The sun, the moon, the stars, the peepul tree, intelligent people and even robust wrestlers, boxers and gymnasts are manifestations of God. When you look at their strength you realise it is something divine. Often it looked as if Swamiji favoured brilliant and wealthy people, but to him a man's affluence was just another vibhuti of God — that prosperity, or that brilliance of intellect is divine. Lord Krishna said, "I am the brilliance of the brilliant." Swamiji saw the manifestation of the divine in all.

Sometimes Swamiji would peel an orange and keep throwing it into the Ganges for the fish, and if a monkey was sitting there he would also get his share. In those days fruit was scarce but he felt that if he could have it the monkey could have it too.

Even in his spectacle-case, shoes, or anything that he handled he saw the divine presence. It started with the Krishna in the temple and went right down to the shoes and the spectacle-case. He would close the spectacle-case very gently; and he handled fountain pens and glasses so sweetly and delicately that you would think he was handling a newborn baby. He never broke one little thing in his life. Even when he took up his shawl and put it round his neck it was done beautifully, delicately and artistically, as if he would hurt the god in that shawl if he were not so gentle; and when he came to the temple and offered the bael leaves on the Siva-lingam he would place them devoutly and gently at its base.

Even things which normally 'feed the senses' appeared in a different light to him. Delicious food not only tickled the nerves of his palate, but reminded him of God who is the deliciousness in all dishes. Music, rather than drawing his consciousness outwards and disturbing his mind, helped to preserve his natural and continuous superconscious state. The silence in the forest was no longer frightening. He saw only the power of the Lord.

To get the spiritual aspirant established in this habit of seeing God in all, Swamiji taught, "First see God in all the special manifestations of divinity. Look up. See the vast infinite blue sky. Doesn't this remind you of God? Look at the resplendent sun and contemplate the self-luminous self. Gaze at the holy waters of the Ganges and see the Lord. Mentally prostrate to these manifestations. Gradually your vision will expand to behold the Lord in even asses and donkeys. Root out the idea of evil from

your mind. When you see someone whom your mind regards as a wicked person, mentally repeat, 'God is the gambling in the cheat'. See God in him and all contempt will vanish at once. You will neither hate nor dread the dacoit, for the Lord himself is the chief among them."



Doing japa on the Ganges bank

Japa: Mantra Repetition

Swamiji was tremendously fond of people repeating a mantra. Every day people, young and old, came to the ashram in Rishikesh and asked a very simple question: "I want to practise yoga; I want to lead a spiritual life. What must I do first?" Instead of beating about the bush with splendid theories about God and about Self and non-Self, Swamiji used to say, "Repeat Ram nam. Repeat God's name". The people who came asking to be his disciples were of varying temperaments and belonged to different religions, but the answer was always the same: "I'll give you a mantra. Repeat it day and night. When you repeat it regularly it will automatically become your 'background of thought'." This answer was very soon followed up with, "What would you like, tea or coffee?" No further questioning — "What is God? What is your conception of God?" — was encouraged.

Swamiji avoided all speculative questions. Once in 1947 a brilliant man appeared at the office at 8 a.m. and asked him to explain the difference between savikalpa samadhi and nirvikalpa samadhi. The disciples who were working in the office looked up expectantly, keen to hear the answer to a question they would never have dared to ask.

Swamiji, who had been doing some work, suddenly put his pen down and looked at the visitor. There was total silence for a couple of minutes and then he asked, "Ohji, what would you like to have — some milk, tea, or coffee?"

When Swamiji asked a question you had to give the answer, so this professor replied, "I think I'll have some coffee, Swamiji."

"And some fruit, some idli?" (Idli is a South Indian breakfast dish). "Yes, Swamiji," the man replied.

Swamiji asked a disciple to get all these. Then he said to another man, "Bring me some books for the doctor." About ten minutes passed in this way. In the meantime coffee and breakfast arrived. Swamiji went on instructing the attendant on how to serve the professor.

In the meantime the professor's wife had been looking for him. A few minutes later she walked in, gave him one stern look and said, "How long are you going to stay here? Get up! Let us go". Meekly the professor got up and left.

After he had gone Swamiji burst out laughing. He laughed and laughed with his whole abdomen trembling, and, wiping his eyes, he said, "He wants to know the difference between nirvikalpa and savikalpa samadhi; and the wife merely looks at him once and says, 'Get up, get up,' and he gets up, and walks quietly behind!"

Swamiji had no patience for vain discussion. His message was: "Repeat Ram nam. Take God's name, do japa. You will discover the answer to all these questions within yourself."

There was another incident which was highly revealing. A renowned political leader came to the ashram, sat down and presented Swamiji with a picture of India in the context of the present world situation, as he saw it. He spoke for forty-five minutes. The only audience he wanted was Swami Sivananda. One had to admire Swamiji's patience. He had his elbows on the table, looking straight into the visitor's eyes, listening. He never said a word. This politician gave a beautiful lucid synopsis of the world situation. When he had finished he looked at Swamiji as if to ask, "Well what is your advice? What is your solution to all this?" Then the ball was in Swamiji's court. Poverty, hunger, over-population, oppression, suppression, depression and compression, the whole lot — what is the solution? His response was beautiful: "Only God's name is the remedy. Repeat God's name." The poor politician felt that the floor was slipping from under his feet. He expected Swamiji to say, "You must become Prime Minister, or form a new party to reconstitute, change, destroy, and so on."

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Swamiji was so certain that the background of thought was so great in its psychological and spiritual effect that he recommended it for the solution of all problems in life.

When he said, "Repeat the mantra day and night," he actually meant that the mantra should be repeated simultaneously, along with all life's activities. He used to demonstrate it very nicely. In India chapatis (flat round unleavened pancakes) are made by the clapping movement of the hands. He used to say, "As you go on doing this, keep singing Sri Ram jaya Ram jaya jaya Ram — both jobs get done at the same time."

When Swamiji gave a disciple a mantra and a mala (rosary), if the disciple said, "I am going to do japa for three hours in the morning, three hours in the afternoon and three hours in the evening without doing any other work," Swamiji would say, "Throw your mala away and come and do some work. Someone who goes on endlessly turning the beads without caring even to give a cup of water to a thirsty man is a hypocrite and a pseudo-devotee. You don't have to sit down and look at your nose to repeat your mantra. The mantra can go on throughout the day and night."

Some of the disciples thought that by doing a lot of work they would please the master more. One day in 1946 Swamiji descended on one swami like a thunderbolt: "How much meditation did you do today? How much japa? Throw your typewriter into the Ganges; and all these other things too. Go and do some japa and meditation. 'All work and no worship' is not correct. 'Work is worship' is indeed the motto, but in practice it should mean 'Work and worship'!" He excelled in working out a balance in which nothing was neglected at any time.

'background of thought' Swamiii called the battlefield pratyahara - how to withdraw the mind and introvert the senses at will. He said: "If there is a temptation, threat, annoyance or irritability, if someone comes and argues with you and you realise that the next moment you are going to explode, the repetition of your mantra can defuse the situation." He was a genius at that. Even when two ashramites started arguing in front of him he would seem to participate in it for a few moments, then say, "Om namah Sivayah," and the whole thing wound up. It didn't matter where the argument lay, how far it had developed or who was the winner or loser. He could cut it short at any point, even if someone was arguing with him. 'Om namah Sivayah' at that point meant 'enough'.

Swamiji did not accept that meditation is possible only when we are not doing anything. He said: "You must be able to meditate even while

you are fighting; but first learn to meditate while doing something like singing kirtan or doing japa, instead of feeling that there is a distraction or contradiction. Whatever the body may be doing, it is possible for the contemplative mood to be sustained. If while doing japa and chanting you can maintain the meditative mood, it is possible for you to find a way to sustain it whatever you are doing."

To Swamiji japa itself was meditation, hence he never described meditation. He said that if you *try* to practise meditation you will invite distraction. You will not be meditating, you will only be trying. But when you go on with your japa you will slip into meditation without effort.

SIVANANDA'S DAILY LIFE

During Swami Sivananda's All-India Tour, millions all over India and Sri Lanka heard him roar: "Get up at 4 a.m. and meditate. Brahmamuhurtha is the best period for meditation." One person who invariably stuck to this principle was Swamiji himself. He generally got up at 3 a.m. The first prayers of the day were offered in bed immediately thereafter. Then a rapid wash, which was never allowed to take more than fifteen minutes, was at once regularly followed by a period of prolonged meditation. He strictly adhered to the necessary preliminaries to meditation —a few rounds of bhastrika pranayama, a few minutes of guru stotras and other hymns.

At first light Swamiji came out of his kutir. He bowed to the Ganges and the Himalayas. Standing ankle-deep in the Ganges he sprinkled the holy waters on himself. In summer this was followed by a few minutes of silent contemplation on the Ganges-bank itself. With the chanting of mantras in praise of Surya, the sun god, he greeted the sun.

Returning to his kutir, half an hour was spent in the practice of asanas and pranayama. "Whatever be the condition of the body, even if I have severe lumbago or rheumatic pains, cough, cold or fever, I cannot remain without practising asanas and pranayama. I do not know how you are able to live at all without doing asanas and pranayama," he said once to a young aspirant who was not so keen on exercising the body. Over an hour was spent in pranayama alone. He did a few rounds of bhastrika in winter and a few rounds of sitali in summer. Before breakfast once again he practised pranayama for about half an hour, then again after returning from the office at noon. Evening found him at it again, and the final

round was done before going to bed at night. Thus he devoted an average of four of the busiest hours of his eventful day to this important practice.

The next two hours of the morning were spent in writing. The thoughts that arose in his fresh mind were immediately transferred fast to notebooks. These notes became the literature that shaped the lives and destinies of millions of aspirants all over the world.



Swamiji wrote intensely for two hours each morning.

Swamiji so arranged the things about him that without rising from his seat he was able to record the thoughts on the various subjects that would arise in his mind at this most auspicious hour. Books of reference which he might need were kept by the side of his writing seat. Rapid and intense work and maximum production with minimum expenditure of energy were the keynotes of his work.

A dozen notebooks were always ready at hand, along with three fountain-pens and two pairs of spectacles, so that a pen running out of ink or even the remote chance of the spectacles breaking could not interfere with the flow of thoughts to the paper. Some notebooks were ear-marked for certain special notes: e.g., Spiritual Lessons and Medical Notes, and others were for General Notes.



Notebooks and pens were always at hand.

At 9 a.m., after nearly three hours of work, he was ready for his breakfast, which consisted of a glass of milk with an occasional dish of light refreshment (tiffin). There were many who shared his repast. The fish in the Ganges were the first; then the monkeys of the locality were served even before Swamiji. If there was some tiffin it was first sent round to several ashramites by turn, and only then Swamiji had his.



Tiffin with Swamiji.

Then there was a change of place; but the work went on. With numerous bags of all kinds of correspondence and articles, he left his kutir for the office premises, the Diamond Jubilee Hall. 'Urgent letters', 'Ordinary letters', 'Articles', 'Journals' — each category had its own bag; sweets and dried fruits, too, (for distribution to children, visitors and seekers who might meet him on the way to the office) had their own bags.

The face of every ashramite Swamiji met on the way drew from his pigeon-holed mind the work he had for him. The ashramite received his share of the prasad first; and then his instructions. Letters and articles were distributed at various 'halting places' en route. Between his kutir and the office Swamiji repeated 'Om Namo Narayana' or 'Tat Twam Asi' or other mantras at least 108 times; he greeted every person with folded palms. Greeting, courtesy, regard, kindness and japa were all combined in this exemplary practice.

At the post office Swamiji enquired if some particular parcel or letter had been despatched. At the 'treasury' he gave the day's instructions to the treasurer. The kitchen manager knew that first thing Swamiji would enquire of him about attendance on visitors and the sick people in the ashram. Though he did more work than any man on earth, Swamiji attended to the minutest details of the work that engaged the whole time of a hundred selfless workers. The kitchen manager was often astonished at how Swamiji put his finger just at that spot where there had been a lapse. The doctor in charge of the Charitable Hospital also got his share of enquiries and instructions.

Swamiji's entry into the office was the signal for the morning prayers to commence. All the sadhakas who worked in the office joined this prayer, as also visitors who were present. The kirtans were followed by Swamiji's own Universal Prayer.

The morning's 'note-books' were given for typing. Swamiji attended to the correspondence. A rack of leaflets and two bowls of the Lord's prasad were at hand; every letter was invariably accompanied by a leaflet containing spiritual instructions and the Lord's prasad, even if it was a purely 'official' letter. Seekers' spiritual diaries gladdened Swamiji's heart. He studied them closely and gave further guidance. Similar treatment was accorded to aspirants' 'Annual Resolves Form'. The Diary and the Resolves Form were his potent devices to keep the seeker constantly awake to the purpose of life. An exceptionally good diary would at once evoke the greatest admiration in him, and he would hand it over to the editor of *The Divine Life* to publish along with his comments on the extraordinary points in it, for the benefit of others all over the world.

On one day the accountant might bring the statement of the ashram's income and expenditure for his perusal, the press manager might want money for paper or a new machine, or an aged swami in charge of the construction work might come to him with great joy to invite him to attend the opening ceremony of a new building. The cashier with his bundle of cheques and postal orders stood in the corner awaiting a chance to approach Swamiji for his signature. Each day the swami in charge of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy Press presented himself and brought to Swamiji's notice the work that was in progress at the press. Articles for publication in other newspapers and journals all over the world; messages of blessings and instruction to individuals and institutions for all kinds of functions — both sacred and secular — were then signed by Swamiji. Once a month, reports from Divine Life Branches were scrutinised and certificates of affiliation with headquarters were signed, and advice on the development of the Branch along the right lines was offered by Swamiji. In the meantime Swamiji might ask a devotee to sing a song, and a professor from some university to deliver a short lecture. As in a busy market, people always ran here and there with papers in their hands, typewriters clattered non-stop in preparing articles for newspapers and journals, and young energetic brahmacharis moved about with tea, milk, biscuits and fruits for distribution to those present. To add to this, a large number of dogs, pups and monkeys at the entrance often fought and made a terrible noise.

After giving rapid instructions to various departments, Swamiji then commenced the important work of the day. A huge 'Who-What-Where Register' then ascended the table. It had spent the night under lock and key. It was Swamiji's treasure. In this 10 lb. index book were noted the names and addresses of all those who were in touch with him —aspirants, disciples, donors, officials, Europeans, Americans, editors and newspapers, ministers, yogis, philosophers, maths and ashrams, 'something-like-disciples' and 'first-class-misers'. A new address at once found its way into this great book. It was this register that enabled Swamiji to contact people all over the world, and to serve them effectively. He was extremely particular in maintaining it, for it was of the greatest assistance to him.

The swami in charge of the 'Free Department' would go over to Swamiji with a small consignment of perhaps a hundred assorted books. The 'WWW Register' and also the departmental 'Free Register' acted as reminders, and Swamiji autographed the books and inscribed the name of the devotee with his own hand, adding to it his blessings. This went on for



The 'Who; what; where' register



Typewriters clattered non-stop.

an hour. Then he himself checked the addresses on parcels that had to go out. The 'Free Department' swami held up the parcel for Swamiji to read the address. Swamiji said: "Om Tat Sat" — the code which he used for signifying that he had satisfied himself with the address. As many 'Om Tat Sat' mantras were repeated as there were parcels. (There was no prosaic act which was not thus flavoured with this wonderful element of sadhana.)

There were two rows of workers in the office. Swamiji sat at the end of the rows. He had a big chair, and once in a while he would merely relax back in it, put his spectacles up, and just look... There was something in that look which was bewitching. Just to look at him was an inspiration.

Swamiji was the most easily accessible person. He made himself available to everybody at large. The office was open, anyone could walk in. Children would even run in and ask, "Swamiji, what is the time now?" — and he answered them.

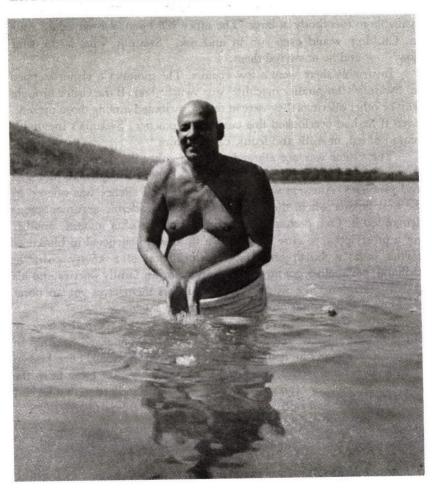
Invariably there were a few visitors. The moment a visitor stepped in Swamiji's 'hospitality machine' was switched on. If the visitor brought fruit or other offerings they were at once distributed among those present. Even if he had overlooked this customary practice, Swamiji's inevitable prasad of tea, or milk and fruits, came to him.

The visitor was not allowed to waste either his time or Swamiji's, though Swamiji patiently listened to the account of his spiritual practices and problems. Answers were readily given; and silence was offered as the best answer where the enquirer's vain or academic argumentations demanded it. One perhaps was initiated into the ishta mantra, another got a prescription to cure a disease, a third was instructed in bhakti or karma yoga, a fourth obtained an elucidation of a knotty point in sadhana, yet another got an opportunity to air his family worries and his grievances against the world. The ashramites themselves got an occasional dose of 'spiritual mixtures' during this session.

If there was sincerity of purpose Swamiji was all sympathy. Sincere but poor and illiterate seekers were known to have engaged Swamiji in conversation for over an hour; and vain pandits have equally been known to have found themselves incapable of drawing his gaze away from the letters on his table or of so much as getting even an indication that he had heard what they had said.

Swamiji returned to his kutir at about noon after ensuring that all the visitors had been properly attended to and that all of them had had their meals and had been shown round the ashram. Then there were a few minutes of silent relaxation, which was more for the purpose of flushing out of his mind the office, the Society and the world and everything else — a sadhana which he never failed to do every day and several times a day — than for actual rest.

In summer Swamiji had his bath before he took his breakfast in the morning, while in winter he had it before lunch. He first worshipped the Ganges with milk and flowers. Offering prayers, he entered the waters. He took a few dips, then performed ceremonies for all devas, the departed souls, etc. He repeated the maha vakyas and the paramahamsa mantra. Then again he took a few more dips — for the sake of those who long to have Ganges bath but are denied the privilege. Then came worship of the Lord at the small shrine in his room.



Swamiji took his food at about 2 p.m. in winter and 12 noon in summer — long after all ashramites and visitors had finished their meals. Before he would take anything, all the sharers should get their share. A few selected slokas from the *Gita* were chanted before taking food.

The first part of the afternoon was spent mostly in study; in summer, when the weather is unbearably hot, he took an hour's rest.

Work began once again at 3.30 p.m. Urgent letters were attended to. Swamiji would leave his kutir after a glass of milk, and attend the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy class (in summer this was held in the morning). The day's inward mail was then placed on his table. Rapidly he would peruse all the letters, sort them out and fill his bags. Those that were not immediately distributed in the office to the departments concerned, accompanied him to his kutir.

Swamiji was meticulous in the matter of receiving and treating guests. If someone had an appointment with him at 5 p.m. he would be in the receiving lobby even at 4.45 p.m. His principle was that the guest should not be made to wait. There was generally a greater rush of visitors in the evening than in the morning. Sometimes Swamiji volunteered to show them round the ashram himself. He started with the various departments in the office, and then took the visitor to the hospital, the ayurvedic pharmacy, the post office, the kitchen, then up the hill to the studio (where often the visitor was shown the yoga movie-films), the yoga museum (where one of the professors of the academy explained the structure of the museum), the guha (cave), then the Bhajan Hall, temple, press, primary school, library, etc. It took a little over an hour — if the visitor was in a hurry. This 'hour' acted only as an appetizer and the visitor always left with a resolve to spend a few days at the ashram.

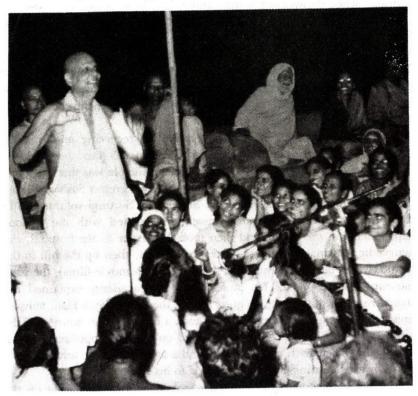
Towards evening Swamiji returned to his kutir.

A casual visitor to the ashram who happened to be sitting on the Ganges-bank might have been amused to witness Swamiji running about the verandah of his kutir. He started with pacing up and down the verandah with OM chanting. (One who approached him closer found a far-away look in his eyes which looked at the surrounding world with an 'unseeing' vacancy that refused to recognise any kind of objective existence.) Then he ran about the verandah — his evening exercise.

In summer Swamiji spent the evening-hour on the Ganges bank in silent contemplation; in winter within the kutir itself.

When the ashram lights came on, Swamiji saluted them, chanting a sloka of the *Gita*. This was his favourite method of giving the 'divine touch' to all phenomena around him.

A glass of milk and one piece of bread, and he was ready to go up to attend the night satsang. Study of *Bhagavad Gita*, recitation of *Ramayana*, chanting of kirtan and bhajan, and an occasional lecture formed the important items in this satsang, and the crowning feature was always Swamiji's own songs.



Sometimes Swamiji would sing and dance

Occasionally he would take part in a drama staged at the ashram satsang, and once, during the Diamond Jubilee, he played the part of a divine messenger — to the delight and amusement of all. On one occasion he narrated the story of Bhakta Nandanar, and, with kartal (a type of cymbal) in his hand, he sang several kirtan which were popular in the 'twenties and 'thirties. The audience was spellbound.

Eminent musicians came from all over India to visit Swamiji, especially during festivals and celebrations. They delighted all with their performances.



The following is an excerpt from a visitor's account of a typical satsang:

Wednesday, May 23rd, 1962. The sun had set. The moon had not yet risen. Sivananda, the simplest among men, emerged from his kutir to proceed to the night satsang. A loving smile lit his childlike face. A large group of devotees, gathered by the roadside, greeted him with folded palms. The devotees saw God in the guru. The guru, too, saw God in the devotees. The atmosphere was charged with devotion.

On the open terrace outside the Diamond Jubilee Hall of the Sivanandashram, kirtan with instrumental accompaniment was going on. The whole place was brightly illuminated. Visitors, ashramites and the locals filled the place — men on one side, women on the other. A myriad stars lighted the dark sky.

The placid waters of the Ganges flowed noiselessly, imperceptibly, in the Rishikesh valley. The river resembled a lake. In the background were the Himalayas, rising high, majestic, looking dark in the night.

Swami Sivananda, the splendour of Ananda Kutir, the muni of Muni-ki-Reti, the rishi of Rishikesh, gently moved in, greeting the devotees as he passed them by. A word here, a smile there, a benediction elsewhere, made many souls happy in the twinkling of an eye.

Swamiji took his seat on an easy chair in a corner, from where he had a full view of the audience. And everyone in the audience could see him, too. Diagonally opposite to him was the picture of Lord Krishna mounted on a decorated altar.

An ashram monk began to recite the Sri Suktam. Devotees came, offered currency notes at Swamiji's feet, went back to their seats. Money flowed like water.

After the Sri Suktam recital, Sivananda called on Subba Rao, a blind *Gita* scholar, to give a talk. There followed an interesting exposition of a few *Gita* slokas.

Swamiji then asked Pal, a radio artiste, to sing. Pal began to render a Tulsidas bhajan in a most melodious voice. As the bhajan went on, a visitor came to Swamiji and hesitantly sought his permission to touch his feet.

A foreigner came. "Om Namo Narayanaya" greeted Swamiji. "From where?"

"From Vienna," replied the gentleman. "My name is George. I wrote three letters to you."

Swamiji asked for books and magazines to be given to the visitor, and thanked him for coming.

Pal finished singing. Then followed kirtan, arati and distribution of prasad. Many devotees now flocked around Swamiji to receive the prasad directly from his hands. One of them was a philosophy professor. Swamiji asked him if there were not Western philosophers equal to Sri Shankara. "There is one Eckehart, isn't there?" asked Swamiji, adding, "Some saintly Christian philosophers are there, I think."

A visitor came. He said he had taken Swamiji's blessings before going abroad at the outbreak of the Korean War and was happy to be able to see Swamiji again.

"You are also a philosophy student?" asked Swamiji.

"No, engineering."

"What, all engineering studies? Mechanical engineer or chemical engineer or Atmic engineer?" he said with a smile. "Something to do with machinery."

"Very necessary nowadays. See, the electricity just failed," said Swamiji, referring to the frequent electricity failures earlier during the satsang.

A letter was handed over to him. It was from an inmate who had been served with a quit notice by the ashram secretary. The letter was in the nature of an appeal: 'Thou art my refuge. Where can I go?' Sivananda, usually very considerate, dismissed the petition with the caustic remark, "Lazy man!" (He had no sympathy for idlers. He considered idleness a sin.)

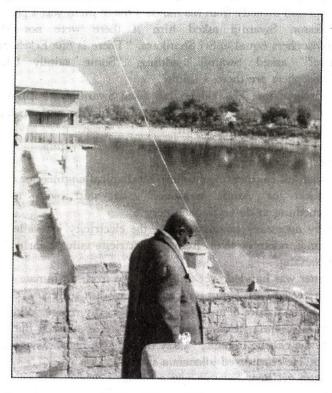
Next to get near Swamiji was a Sanskrit professor from Gwalior. He narrated how, as a student, he had gone through Swamiji's book on brahmacharya and benefited much. He then referred to Swamiji's *Conquest of Mind*, a recent release. Sivananda gave a copy to the professor who remarked that it would help him greatly in guiding a research student doing his doctorate thesis. Swamiji then asked, 'You are my professor or student?"

"You are my professor. I am your student," came the reply.

As he began to move slowly through the devotees lining his path, a visitor burst out with a few lines from a Tamil scripture, the meaning of which is: "Oh, Lord, give me that state where the mind melts, where acts cease... where all is quiet."

"Yes, be still, be quiet," said Swamiji, "but let the hands be working. Give the mind to God and the hands to work. Quiet within, active without."

Slowly Swamiji wended his way back to his kutir, quietly repeating some mantras — in his own words 'to compensate for the time spent in useless talk'.



At the entrance to his kutir he took leave of the devotees with folded palms and short prayers from different religions. Even as he went in one could see from the expression on his face that his mind was now completely taken away from the devotees, away from songs and lectures, away from puja and prasad, to be alone with the Infinite.

MIRACLES

Swami Sivananda regarded miracles or psychic powers as the greatest obstacles on the spiritual path, and warned the aspirant against them. Though he himself undoubtedly possessed miraculous powers of the highest order he never openly admitted them, but rather disowned them when they were brought to his notice, saying: "The Lord is performing these miracles in order to create faith in more and more people." He did not like psychic powers and never encouraged the pursuit of them.

If somebody said, "Swamiji, you appeared in my dream and put your hand on my stomach and my cancer was cured," his response always was, "Ah, it's all God's grace." He never owned it himself. If someone said, "I saw you in a vision and my life was saved," he would say, "Yes, God does all this." When something had gone wrong according to our judgement — somebody perhaps had robbed the Ashram, harmed the Ashram, or done some mischief — even then he would say, "God is doing all this."

Swamiji was not really conscious that he was doing something wonderful. When he met you, your inner personality revealed itself to him as clearly as this paper appears before your eyes. He did not have to exercise any special powers. Your heart and mind were an open book to him; the thought that you might think would just occur to him, too; and the wish that arose in your heart would easily be understood by him. "I also thought like that," he might say; or, doing what you had mentally prayed for, he might merely remark, "I thought you would like this." You would be amazed, not he; to him it was natural.

Clairvoyance, thought-transference, distant-healing etc. were so

commonplace with him that he did not even acknowledge them. He did not trumpet his own realisation or visions of God. The philosophy he applied to himself and to all others was 'Know him by his works'.

While Swamiji was in Swarg Ashram a neighbour of his called Swami Rajarajeswarananda was a worshipper of Devi, the Divine Mother. He was doing rigorous sadhana with worship of Devi, japa and meditation. The sadhana went on for nearly twelve years, and there was no indication of any progress or psychic powers. The time for Durga Puja came. This swami had nothing to celebrate the puja with, and he longed to worship the Devi with silk cloths, ornaments and other puja articles; but he had no money.

On the day before the commencement of Navaratri (the time of Durga Puja), someone knocked at his door. He opened it and saw a few Punjabi girls standing there. Each one had a plate on which there were silk cloths, fruits, money, ornaments, etc. "Swami Sivananda, your neighbour, asked us to give these to you for your Navaratri Puja," they said. The swami believed their words, thinking that these ladies must be devotees of Swamiji, who had asked them to get the articles for Rajarajeswaranandaji's worship of the Divine Mother, and so he accepted them with great joy.

"Whose plates are these?" he asked.

"The kshetra's," replied the young girls as they took the plates and left.

Rajarajeswarananda could not contain himself. He went straight to Swamiji's kutir. As usual it was bolted from within. He knocked and Swamiji opened the door.

"Who are those Punjabi ladies, Swamiji?" he asked.

"Which ladies?" asked Swamiji.

"Those ladies you sent with silk cloths, ornaments, etc. for the Navaratri Puja."

"I did not send anyone," replied Swamiji.

Rajareswaranandaji was mystified. He ran to the kshetra office, but the girls were not there!

In later years Rajarajeswaranandaji told us this story, saying, "I had been doing intense sadhana for the darshan of the Divine Mother for so many years. Swami Sivananda, for all I know, knew no tantrik sadhana, and yet when Mother did choose to grace me with Her vision, She did so at Swami Sivananda's instance. She gave me ornaments and silk cloths, and She gave him Self-realisation."

Miraculous cures were effected by prayers conducted at the ashram

Miracles 241

by Swamiji. People who had faith attained the object of their desires by opening their hearts to him, by sincerely praying to him and by devotedly serving him. His was a super-mind, endowed with phenomenal psychic faculties, therefore when he thought particularly of a person in order to send them a book or a reply to their letter, or even spontaneously, the thought would at once establish a psychic contact between him and the disciple. Through this channel the most powerful and concentrated beam of his consciousness flowed, understanding the disciples' needs and bringing about miraculous visions and messages. It was something like a 'reflex action' with him. It was quite natural.

Professor N.K. Srinivasta, M.A. L.L.B., relates:

In September 1948, I stayed with Swamiji and plunged into sadhana under his direction. I was practising sirshasana meditation without Swamiji's knowledge. When my practice went up to 45 minutes, one day in my meditation I saw Swamiji in a gown which he had never put on before. After my meditation, as I was proceeding to the Bhajan Hall I met Swamiji coming up the steps of his kutir. I was dumbfounded to see him dressed in the same gown which I had seen in my meditation. He smiled and remarked that I was doing sirshasana very well.

My father fell seriously ill in 1941, while we were all staying at Gopal Kutir, Rishikesh. We despaired of his life. I rushed to Swamiji for medicine. Without even hearing my account of my father's ailment, Sri Swamiji gave four powders. He told me to enjoy the Lord's prasad without worrying about the illness of my father and that the powders would cure him. The third powder brought him round.

My sister Shyama, a blessed disciple of Swamiji, went to Patna and started preaching the gospel of Swamiji. A woman came to her and begged that a son might be born to her. In her ecstatic mood, Shyama gave her a mantra and blessed her in Swamiji's name. Shyama immediately afterwards wrote to Swamiji to support her in her presumptuous act. Swamiji wrote her back saying that her blessings had already been substantiated. In due course the woman had a beautiful son.

At that time my youngest sister, Miss Mira Srivastava (now Mrs. Sinha), had a peculiar type of facial eczema. The more it was treated the worse it became. The doctors were outwitted. We brought her to Swamiji. First he tried to put us off by suggesting the

names of some big doctors in Delhi, but my mother and all my sisters, who became great devotees of Swamiji afterwards, fell at his feet as their last refuge. He chanted Ram nam and gave an ointment to apply. In a few days she was radically cured. For her beauty of face and happy marriage she owes to Swamiji a debt of gratitude which neither she nor her husband nor her brothers and sisters can ever repay.

On September 13, 1952, the clothes of my wife caught fire. Her burns were of the third degree. On the 14th I received a letter from Swamiji asking me about her condition! I had not written to Swamiji since I left him in 1951. The doctors despaired of her life, because the wounds had become terribly septic. But she got a letter of invitation from Swamiji to join the Sadhana Week in December 1952. We were fully reassured that she would not die. She is alive and kicking.

Vedantins hardly believe in anything but the highest impersonal universal experience of samadhi. Yet Sri Swami Krishnanandaji, a vedantin of vast learning and practical wisdom, was once sick — rather his body was! Biliousness and fever had a firm grip on his poor constitution; and they showed no sign of relaxing their hold for days on end. No medicine, fasting or other therapeutics could be of any avail. Very near despair he resigned himself and thought the best thing was to take rest. Hardly a few minutes had elapsed when the dull head suddenly cleared up. A gush of energy filled him. He rubbed his eyes and sat up. "What, am I dreaming? Oh, am I drunk?" He looked around — Siva-Siva-Siva —everywhere; Siva on the walls, Siva on the chair, Siva himself as the water pot, Siva the door, Siva the doormat, Siva the stick, Siva the bed, Siva the cloth. Siva alone existed. Biliousness vanished; fever disappeared. A few minutes later Krishnanandaji was taking his bath!

From Professor O.P. Sharma, Delhi:

In 1942 my parents visited Rishikesh. At the first sight of Swami Sivananda my father was simply hypnotised and my mother fascinated. There was a very grand aura over Swamiji's face, which had a command of its own. There was a very grand cheer and smile in his entire personality.

My mother was worried for the entire period of her later life. My eldest brother, Sri R.C. Kumar, was at the fighting front in Egypt and for a very long time we never heard anything about his

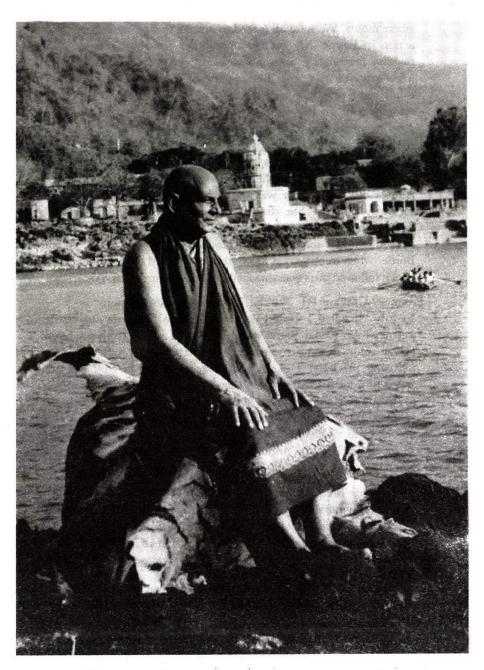
whereabouts. We were all forced to believe that he must be dead in action in Egypt. My mother's condition was most pitiable. The majestic personality, Swami Sivananda, simply smiled and uttered a few graceful sentences. They were this: "Never despair. Your son is all right. He will return soon." This was all. To our great astonishment my brother returned home on 21st September 1942. Another wonderful incident also happened. It was in August 1947. All of us made up our minds to stay at Sialkot city during the days of disturbances. We had a notion that even in spite of change of governments, people might not change. During the midnight of August 8th my mother was startled by a sudden dream and she suddenly rose up. She dreamt that Swami Sivanandaji ordered: "Leave this place immediately and go to Hardwar." We simply obeyed, though somewhat reluctantly. We only got to the Indian Border when to our great amazement we heard that the next train which followed ours was smashed by the Muslims near Wazirabad.

From Sri Umkant Pd. Shukla, Hon. Magistrate, Hajipur:

In July '51 when I visited the holy Ananda Kutir on our return journey from Kedar-Badri yatra, I received a letter from my house about some domestic troubles and perplexing problems. After perusing the letter I at once approached Swamiji Maharaj and asked him for his blessings so that I might get rid of the troubles. Sri Swamiji Maharaj looked at me with his usual smiling face and said nothing. But, to my great surprise, when I reached home after a week I was told by my people that the matters which were causing so much anxiety and annoyance to them had disappeared only a few days before. This was all Swamiji's grace.

From Swami Turiyananda:

I had left my home for good and was living at Benares as a wandering sadhu. I used to spend almost all my time in the temple of Mother Annapurna. One day I had a vision in which a tall and well-built swami and three of his disciples appeared before me. The swami said, "Come to me," and vanished. Then I went to the Sivanandashram on my way to Badrinath. When I met Swamiji I knew that this was the swami whom I had seen in the vision. When I entered the office I had another wonderful vision in which I saw Swami Sivananda filling the whole place and extending beyond. Swamiji merely gazed at me and said, "This is your Badrinath, stay here." I had to obey.



Clairvoyance, distant healing, etc. were commonplace to Swamiji

From Swami Jyotirmayananda, Rishikesh:

I was suffering from acute appendicitis and had terrible pain. I went to the ashram to have Swamiji's darshan. I explained my condition to him, and said that I did not want to undergo any operation but that I had faith that his blessings would cure me. He simply gazed at me for a moment. The pain vanished. Now there is no trace of appendicitis; and, even the tenderness in the region has gone.

People living physically far, far away from Swamiji felt drawn to him and got visions of him. They needed his service and Swamiji was eager to serve them, adopting the basic attitude that all bodies belong to the one Cosmic Being and all minds constitute the one Cosmic Mind. The following are some recorded instances.

From a magazine article:

During the course of an interview, when journalists asked Frau Walinski a number of searching questions, she declared that she had actually seen the great yogi, Sri Swami Sivananda, in a vivid vision on Christmas Eve in 1951. (It was that mystic experience that has revolutionised her life itself, and compelled her to dedicate her life to the divine cause.)

Notwithstanding her Western upbringing and education she is implicit in her faith and explicit in her conviction that this yogi who had thus revolutionised her life 'is a very near incarnation of God, if not God Himself'.

Frau Walinski, who has led the normal life of a pious Catholic all her fifty years of life, is a well-educated intelligent German lady and is certain that she is intellectually too strong to be influenced psychically. She has wonderful business acumen and has had an eventful career as an executive in a publishing house. Her husband is a police official and they have two sons. The children have inherited the piety of the parents and have perhaps been greatly influenced during the past few years by their mother's spiritual experience. Throughout the past few years this pious family had been guided practically in their day-to-day life by Swamiji in a mysterious manner. "Every morning Siva (Swami Sivananda) wakes me up," says Mrs. Walinski. "He has solved many difficulties in our life. And I am sure that he will work through me in the future and help me serve humanity."

What is most significant is the fact that the voice, often corroborated by Swamiji's own letters, has invariably urged her to work, work. "Work in the home as a wife and mother. Work in the office and do your duty, and serve humanity too in the manner you best can," has been the invariable command. Frau Walinski has implicitly obeyed, working throughout the day at home and in the office, and till late into the night on her own books and translations of Swamiji's works in German.

In August this year she had a vision in which Swamiji asked her, "Will you be a good disciple?" and she replied, "Yes." Then the voice commanded her to proceed to India. On the 7th August she saw the vision, and on the 19th September she received Swamiji's letter, the contents of which had been revealed to her beforehand. She was convinced beyond doubt that her visions and the messages she had been receiving from the Voice were absolutely real. During the moments of her meditation arose an inward feeling in her that mankind is one family and the whole world is knit in one Supreme Spirit, and that the spiritually awakened can speak with one another across continents with the ease with which people talk to each other from two neighbouring rooms.

When she had determined to come to India the problems were those of the passage money and the husband's reaction. "Siva said everything would be all right," says Mrs. Walinski, "and in a few days a good friend turned up who said he would finance the trip and my husband voluntarily came forward to do all he could to materialise my spiritual ambition."

So she is in India at the feet of the Master. Soon after her arrival he gave her mantra diksha.

From Sri. Dhanam, South Africa:

My father-in-law was a follower of Cuddapah Satchidananda Swamiji. I used to watch him pray and practise yoga and was myself longing for a guru. One day in 1947 I was bitterly crying at night. That night I had a dream. Cuddapah Swamiji appeared before me in the dream and said: "I am not your guru; your guru will come into your life in due course."

His form appeared before me and said, "Open the chest of drawers in your father-in-law's room; see what is waiting for you there." Next morning I opened that very chest of drawers that I had seen in the dream, and took out the Sivananda Diamond Jubilee Com-

memoration Volume. The moment I joyously took that book in my hand and opened it, the radiant face of Swami Sivananda shone from the pages of that book.

Soon after this miraculous experience, I wrote to Swami Sivananda Maharaj. Two weeks later, once again I had his vision; he appeared in his dazzling form with flowing robes. In that vision he gave me a book to study. The next morning the postman brought me the very book, sent by Swamiji.

The next day I had another vision in which Swamiji appeared. I saw myself in the ashram at Rishikesh. The flowing Ganges, the towering Himalayas, the peaceful surroundings and the blissful ashram — I saw them all in the vision. I fell at Swamiji's feet and begged, "Not only in this birth, but in all my future births, Oh Lord, you must be my guru." Swamiji initiated me into the mantra and assured me: "I am your guru and I am ever with you." Since then I must say that Swamiji has always been with me, protecting me from dangers and guiding me to the goal. Every day of my life since then has been one of a round of miraculous experiences; and I shall set forth here only a few of them.

Once again I found myself in Ananda Kutir in a vision and sat underneath the same tree as I had done in the previous vision. This time Swamiji gave me a message to the people of South Africa and uttered the two significant words: "Detach-attach." (Detach the mind from the objects, attach it to the Lord). I had never before heard these words from the lips of anyone. A week later I got a pamphlet from the Ashram, and when I opened it I found these very words — 'Detach-attach'.

One day I was fasting. Towards the evening I felt a little weak and I had just dozed a little. In a moment Swamiji was there encircled by a blue dazzling light. It appeared as though the roof of the house had disappeared and through that opening he descended into the house. I touched his feet in humble devotion. He blessed me. In sheer joy I screamed. Hearing this, my mother ran into the room. She, too, saw the dazzling blue light though she did not see Swamiji's form. I know that the vision was something very, very real and not my imagination.

From Dr. Siyananda Sundari:

Soon after the death of my mother, who was a constant companion to me till then, I was posted to a city hospital by the grace of God,

as the Resident Medical Officer, which kept me busy all the hours except a few in the night for sleep; and thus I had no occasion to feel lonely. It was during this time that I came to know of Swami Sivananda through some of his books which were presented to me by someone for some service done. Only after one year could I get leave to go to his holy feet and have his darshan, and return with his blessings as his disciple.

After 3½ years service in this hospital, I got a transfer order. I was worried as to how I could go alone and live in a private house, as there were no quarters attached to the hospital. That evening I was sitting and gazing at Swamiji's photo which was before me, thinking about my transfer. Suddenly I heard a familiar voice calling me as "Doctor, Doctor," from the front verandah. I was sitting in the back side hall where I used to be day and night, receiving memos from the hospital from the back door which was nearest to the delivery room. I went to the front hall and opened the door. Here I saw Swami Sivananda with walking stick in his hand and a divine smile on his face, coming towards the door and entering the hall. I prostrated at his holy feet with great reverence and joy. When I stood up there was no one before me, so I went and looked for him in the side room. Then I closed the door and sat in my usual place and meditated on Swamiji. From that moment I became courageous about my transfer, and since then I always feel his divine presence near me.

My second visit to Sivanandashram was six years after the first, as I could not get long leave due to service exigencies. After 7 days' travelling by train and bus I reached the ashram one fine morning and came to know that I would be able to have Swamiji's darshan only next morning when he was to return from Roorkee after a short stay there for a change after his long illness. I was much disappointed and depressed, and so sat down in the kutir and determined not to have bath or take food before having his darshan. I closed my eyes as tears began to flow; and I wanted to hide them from my sister, who was with me. In a few minutes I saw a bright light like lightning in the kutir, and Swamiji standing before me. I stood up and prostrated at his holy feet. Before I could call my sister, he disappeared. I went out of the kutir and looked for him and asked my sister whether she had seen Swamiji going in or out of the kutir. She said no. It was a fact that he was at Roorkee at that time, returning only next morning to the ashram. Such

experiences have revealed to me the mysteries of great saints which I used to think of in my childhood as wonders. Our Swamiji is the omnipresent Sri Krishna in this yuga and is found to be a moving commentary of the *Bhagavad Gita*. My humble prostrations at his lotus feet. May his blessings be upon us all.

From Sivananda Sarada:

From an invisible source, I heard a voice in my room. That experience began my contact with the mighty yogi of the Himalayas. And this was not all, for on the Christmas of the year 1951 Swami Sivananda granted me the strange experience of his vision. I saw him as clearly, as vividly, as palpably as I see now his picture facing my writing table. Not even a fortnight passed by after this experience, when my husband handed me a cover from the Yoga Vedanta Forest University brochure.

The cover brought me a small autographed photograph of Swami Sivananda. This picture has become my life's companion; wherever I go it accompanies me. My contact with Swamiji strengthened itself as much in thought and spirit as through my correspondence with him. My interest in him grew and gathered strength. In thought and spirit I experienced the communion with his divine presence everywhere. For full three years I was trained invisibly from a distance of five thousand miles, until I was taken to his holy ashram in India, where I saw him in flesh and blood.

Everyone at the ashram, including myself, was very happy. I used to sit close to Swamiji and observe how deeply absorbed he was in rapturous meditative moods and yet to all appearance engaging himself in dozens of works at the same time. Nothing escaped his eyes and ears and hands, and yet he was observed to be in a deep meditation on his own inner spiritual Self. My own experiences with Swamiji have proved to me that he is a great sage, a yogi, a mystic, the prophet of the new age.

From P.B. Mathur, Gaziabad:

I was very glad to receive Swamiji's instructions. His letter gave me a great peace of mind. I derived an ever-lasting peace from it. I felt a sudden change in myself when I read Swamiji's books or letters, and I felt every day a new change in myself. Whenever I see his photo I get great peace of mind. Whenever I find my mind restless I repeat his teachings and they give me real peace.

From Sri A.K. Sinha, (Retired Inspector-General of Police, Bihar): My wife got a severe attack of paralysis while serving me during my illness. Famous doctors who said that it was impossible for them to forecast before 72 hours have passed what turn the disease would take, were amazed to see her getting life in the paralysed parts long before the period of 72 hours ended. My wife felt that Swami Sivananda was making passes over the paralysed parts; and what the passes had done, the doctors later came to know.

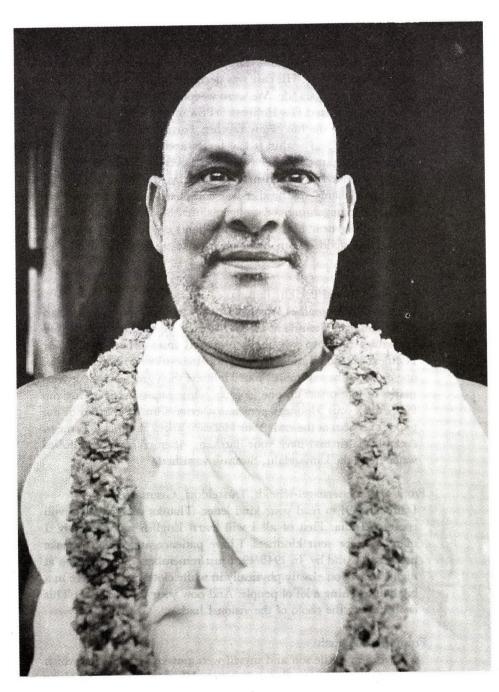
My youngest son, while appearing on the last day of his university exams, found to his great disappointment that he could not answer a single question. He became so desperate that he stood up with the object of handing over a blank answer paper. He suddenly felt Swami Sivananda putting a hand on his head and sternly asking him to sit down, since the youngster knew all the answers. He obeyed, and did answer all questions. His success has been gazetted.

From Sri Satchidananda Prasad Sinha:

Once on a cold winter morning in February 1958, a friend of mine who lives adjacent to my quarters came to me in a perturbed state of mind and told me that his only grandson was having high temperature. The child was only $2\frac{1}{2}$ months old. I at once went with him and found that the temperature was 105 degrees. The condition of the boy was precarious. I was visibly moved and sent for a doctor. I took out my mala, closed the eyes and began to chant the maha mrityunjaya mantra. I meditated upon Swami Sivananda, who is the Doctor of doctors. I prayed for his mercy and blessings.

To my utter surprise I saw Swamiji wearing a long warm coat and carrying a walking stick in one hand. He took the child on his lap, intimated to me that it would be all right in a short time, and then left the place. When I opened my eyes I knew I had sat there for half an hour. I took the temperature again, it was 103 degrees and the child was returning to normal. In the evening the child was completely all right. This is guru's grace. Swamiji does not like to see his devotees in trouble. He is always by the side of one who totally surrenders to him.

From Sri Umkant Shukla, Hon. Magistrate, Hajipur: In May 1950 my elder brother, Sri Lakshmikant Shukla, was



confined to bed. He had a complicated kidney malady. One day his condition became very serious and alarming. He was in a coma and was quite unconscious. Despite the best treatment available here he was sinking. His case was declared hopeless and we all lost hope of his precious life. We were weeping bitterly. In the meantime I remembered His Holiness Sri Swamiji Maharaj and prayed to him to save the life of my brother. Fortunately my prayer was responded to, and within a few hours and before the arrival of Patna's doctor, my brother (who was hovering between life and death) regained consciousness. Thus, by the blessings of Sri Swamiji Maharaj, my brother was completely cured. My brother told us, after regaining consciousness, that he dreamt that Swamiji was standing near him keeping his hand on his head, and after seeing this vivid dream he at once woke up with the feeling of elation.

From Ramaniklal Parikh, Baroda:

On the 15th September 1956, Swami Sivananda, you gave darshan to my daughter Premila at about 5.30 p.m. She offered you cooked vegetables and two sweetballs prepared from groundnuts. Your Holiness graced us and took three-fourths out of one sweet ball and one piece of the vegetable. Your Holiness then graced us by giving marks of foot-prints on one foolscap white paper. After giving the footprints, your Holiness personally wrote Om on the top of the paper and Shri at the end. Your Holiness asked Premila to come to Ananda Kutir and have your darshan. After giving a handful of water from the kamandalu, Swamiji vanished.

From Mrs Steuernagel-scheidt, Dusseldorf, Germany:

I am pleased to read your kind letter. Thanks very much. I will come to India. First of all I will learn English more fluently. I thank you for your kindness. I have patience and belief to make progress by and by. In 1948/49, I just remember, I had a vision at night. I saw you exactly physically in white clothing. You were in a big hall teaching a lot of people. And now your picture I see. This is absolutely the photo of the vision I had.

From Sri Lokanath:

My wife, my little son and myself were passengers in a bus which carried over a dozen other passengers. We were proceeding along

the hill roads near Pauri. The motor-car went out of the driver's control and gave one jerk before falling off a precipice. The bus rolled on the hillside. The doors behind got opened and all the twelve passengers seated in the rear-seats of the bus were thrown out. Nothing more was heard of them. We were caught in the front seat.

When the bus gave a severe jolt before falling off the road, my little son, Satchidananda, mysteriously uttered: "Sat-Guru-Maharaj ki jai," and this at once brought to our minds the glorious form of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, our guru. His protecting arms were around us. Even though along with the bus we rolled several hundred feet down the hillside and the bus itself was smashed to pieces, we three sustained only very minor injuries, from which we recovered almost the next day.

Another bus which had been following ours stopped at the scene of the accident and rescued us. We were immediately removed to a hospital.

We were the only few who escaped unhurt in the terrible accident. It was all due to Sri Swamiji's miraculous grace.

From Sri Satchidananda Prasad, Gardanibagh, Patna:

Due to heavy flood in Andhra Pradesh, the railway lines between Palasa and Tuni were seriously damaged. The roads were also not free. I had to pass between these two stations on bus and foot. At one place I had to cross a river which was in full spate, on foot, along with my wife. With my ishta mantra on my lips while I was crossing it in a jovial mood, I felt as if I was crossing the Bhawasagara, with my guru Swami Sivananda on my head. I was just about to fall into a ditch, but Swamiji, who was just standing on the other side and looking at me, at once cried out and warned me to proceed after taking a right turn. I at once did according to his instructions, and thus saved my life, due only to his kindness. When I reached the other side, I was surprised to not find the man who had saved my life."

From Sri Chellaramani:

In 1948, while I was on my pilgrimage to the shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath (which necessitates a trek of about 200 miles in the interior of the Himalayas) my right leg became acutely painful and swollen after I had covered only half the distance on foot.

Therefore, I entered as an indoor patient in the civil hospital at Josimath for treatment. I remained there for a full week, but there was no improvement. On the contrary, the doctor suggested an operation. I became very disappointed. Then I remembered my sadguru, Swami Sivananda, and dropped him a postcard, seeking his blessings. It was to my surprise that the day he received my letter (at Ananda Kutir) improvement started and I could walk towards Badrinath very shortly, without having to undergo the operation. Thus I completed my sacred yatra by the miracle of my master.

In 1950, I attended the Great Kumbha Festival along with my wife and daughter. On the last day, when we were returning to our place of residence after the sacred bath at Hari-ki-Pauri, we were caught up in the tragedy of stampede due to uncontrollable surge of the moving pilgrims. Before our eyes we saw about thirty persons crushed to death. We all desperately remembered Swami Sivananda at the moment of acute anxiety. Immediately stout ropes descended on us from above. As if by magic we were hauled up in no time to the upper story of a building by some merciful people, and were thus able to save our lives by the grace of Swamiji.

From Mrs V.S. Ram, Lucknow:

One night, just before retiring to bed, as usual I sat on my terrace upstairs doing my japa. After a little while, though my eyes were closed, I could see some light, very bright before my eyes. I felt a bit nervous, as I thought some thief might be standing there with a torch towards my face, and I at once opened my eves and found nothing. Again I closed my eyes to continue my japa, laughing at my own fears. Again that same bright light shone before me, but this time I was more firm and bold and never opened my eyes. Gradually that light disappeared and I could very clearly see my beloved Swami Sivananda's sweet inspiring face full of smiles. He had nice red 'kumkum' as big as a coin on his forehead. I could even see (though not very distinctly) his holy feet crossed on one another. I at once bowed my head to kiss the divine feet in reverence; but I only kissed mother earth, and woke up from my very pleasant trance. Ah! how sad I was to have missed my sweet guru's divine touch! After a little meditation I got up in a very happy mood and went to bed. I slept very well. This morning as usual I woke up exactly at 5 a.m. and came downstairs. After



having a wash, etc. and keeping the water on the electric stove for making coffee, I sat down again for my morning prayers. My children woke up much later. I saw the same illumining, glorious sweet face of Swamiji again, to my great joy. It made me sing and jump with joy.

From Sri Sivananda-Vani, All India Radio:

On more than one occasion I have experienced this wonderful magic, even with my very ordinary and simple kirtan-singing, when I was all alone, singing to myself with all my mind turned towards the Supreme. What did I see? Believe me or not, I saw clearly our adorable Swami Sivanandaji sitting quietly in a chair which was already there (as though it was kept for him) and nodding his head in appreciation and softly giving beats with his

hand to suit the music. I was bewildered and astonished and some inner joy was felt by me. I continued my singing with my eyes wide open, gazing at our Swamiji who visited me so kindly only for my humble music. I stopped my music; and, keeping the tampura on the ground, I bent my head to prostrate at his holy feet (which I could see clearly). But lo! when I lifted my head to see his smiling face, the chair was empty and there was no one! The doors which were bolted from inside by me were intact, as left by me. I understood the miracle at once, and I was happy beyond measure. This happened once or twice when I was in Lucknow. Swamiji was then at Rishikesh. How could he visit me! I wrote to him at once about it. Of course he did not comment upon it; but he is the Indweller, and knows everything.

By his constant eagerness to serve all and to relieve the suffering of all, Swamiji won the hearts of all mankind. He became spiritually one with the whole of mankind, constantly radiating supreme joy, peace, life and light. In his very presence, therefore, people enjoyed healing vibrations and peace-giving light emanations. His very look elevated, transformed and sublimated everything it alighted on. Godliness wafted around him; the darkness of atheism, worldliness and undivine elements vanished from the heart which the light of his grace penetrated. Meditation had imparted lustre to his countenance, power to his eyes and an irresistible magnetism to his entire personality. His aura was such that people who approached him with a hundred complaints were silenced, and enmity fled his very presence.

He demonstrated wonderful miracles through his soul-elevating divine songs. Those were the days when fashion reigned supreme and educated people were shy to repeat God's name. And there were those, too, who were against singing the names of the Incarnations of God like Rama and Krishna, since God was ultimately nameless and formless. That was their view. Listening to Swamiji for a brief moment was all the remedy that these people needed; and they invariably sang the divine name and danced with him on the public platform, throwing their delusion, their foolish fashions and their doctrines to the winds. What can be greater than this? Swamiji became such an embodiment of supreme devotion to the lotus-feet of the Lord that anyone who came into contact with him received the waves of devotion in spite of himself.

The conduct of the Divine Life Society's affairs is itself a great miracle. Without a budget, without a reserve fund, without a bank

balance and without a regular source of income, to run a big institution on such a lavish scale is a miracle.

To recruit everyone with the least inclination and lesser qualification into his fold and to transform everyone into a saintly personality without the rigours of austerity or regimented life of sadhana, is a miracle of the highest order. To sit in his simple kutir on the banks of the Ganges in a corner of the Himalayas and to spread the light of divine knowledge to the four corners of the world, to let his life-transforming message resound in every nation of the world, is the greatest miracle.

THE ASSAILANT

On the 8th January 1950 the night satsang was in progress. It was fairly dark inside the Bhajan Hall, as during kirtan even the lantern which was used for reading of *Gita* etc. was reduced and put aside. The two oil lamps that stood on either side of the altar shone as brightly as they could, but were only able to illumine a third of the hall, leaving the entrance dark.

Govindan, a young man whom Swamiji had maintained in the ashram for months prior to this, approached Swamiji through this dark entrance, axe in hand. The axe was raised. As it fell it missed its mark and struck the door. Govindan, becoming more nervous, raised the axe to strike again at Swamiji. This time a picture on the wall received the blow. Only the wooden handle of the axe struck Swamiji's turban. Generally as soon as Swamiji entered the Bhajan Hall he used to remove the cloth turban he wore when he left his kutir; but that day he forgot. Swamiji, thinking it was a stick with which he was struck, raised his hand, scratching it on the axe.

Swami Vishnudevananda's attention was drawn to the assailant by one of the women sitting nearby. He got up and, hugging Govindan so tightly that he could not lift his hand again, drew him outside. The crowd in the Bhajan Hall immediately realised what had happened, and two of them held Govindan while his feet and hands were bound. Then one or two people started to beat him. Swamiji shouted at the top of his voice: "Don't beat him, don't beat him," and Govindan was rescued and taken to a nearby room and locked in.

"Continue the kirtan," said Swamiji; and the kirtan, arati and peace

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chants were duly conducted and the satsang came to a close. In the meantime one swami ran to the Diamond Jubilee Hall and, in broken sentences, informed the swamis there of what had happened. They ran to the police station, got a couple of policemen and ran with them up to the Bhajan Hall. From there all the assembled people went to the room where Govindan had been kept. Quickly the rope that bound his feet together was removed and he stood up, guarded on both sides by policemen. The crowd watched. Swamiji went straight to Govindan and bowed to him with folded palms, saying, "Govindan, do you want to deal some more blows? Here I am. Kindly satisfy yourself." (The police inspector gazed at this scene with great wonder.) Govindan muttered: "No; I do not want to beat you any more. I am satisfied." Everyone's face indicated that these words poured ghee into the fire of wrath that they were somehow managing to control. "What harm did I do to you? Why did you get so angry with me?" enquired Swamiji in a loving manner. For this there was no reply.

After this, all left the Bhajan Hall and wended their way down the hill towards Swamiji's kutir.

"What shall we do, Swamiji? Shall I lodge a complaint against this man?" asked the police inspector. "No, no, just send him away from Muni-ki-Reti. That is enough," said Swamiji, and left for his kutir. Here he was greeted by an endless stream of visitors. Many of the men and women of the locality, on hearing of the incident, rushed to Swamiji's kutir in tears, in spite of the late hour. Swamiji sat and received them all, smiling radiantly as if nothing had happened.

Surely Swamiji had had the protection of the Lord. It was later discovered that Govindan had been lying in wait for him in the morning; he knew that Swamiji always went alone all the way from his kutir to the Bhajan Hall. Swamiji would then have been entirely undefended. It would have been an easy job for the assailant. But Swamiji did not go to the Bhajan Hall for the early morning class. "I don't know how I slept so soundly that I did not wake up at 3.30," he said. Govindan had made a couple of circumambulations of the Bhajan Hall, impatiently waiting for Swamiji. Usually Govindan never used to stir out of his room before 9 a.m., but for one day in his life he attended the morning satsang and did kirtan also in the early morning hours. At night Swamiji always removed his turban on reaching the Bhajan Hall. He was not able to say why he did not remove it that day.

Govindan had calculated the distance between Swamiji and the door, and had adjusted the axe correctly in the first instance, but forgot to

take into account the projection of the Bhajan Hall door. When the first blow was struck and missed its mark he became conscious of this factor; but when he went nearer to his mark he forgot to re-adjust the axe again.



On the next day it was decided that Govindan should be provided with two ashramite escorts and leave on the Grand Trunk Express with a ticket to Salem, his native place.

Swamiji would not countenance any suggestion that Govindan should be charged, saying: "No, no, we should not punish him. He only worked out my prarabdha (karma). Do you mean to say that anything could happen without the Lord's will? No, the Lord only prompted Govindan to do what he did. Is dyutam chalayatam asmi (I am the gambling of the fraudulent: GitaX:36) mere words? Does not the same omnipresent Lord indwell the robber and the dacoit, the murderer and the burglar? No, I will not let the police charge Govindan. We should thank him for working out my karma so easily. The Lord has spared my life because there is some more service to be performed through this body. I must go on with that service. That is all the incident indicates to me."

Swamiji went to the police station at about 11 a.m. with fruits, books, clothes, new blanket and japa-mala. With his own hand he applied kumkum and bhasma on Govindan's forehead, and then prostrated before him. Those present were wonderstruck at this sight. Swamiji then gave the books with this autographed blessing: "May the Lord bless you with health, long life, peace, prosperity, devotion, wisdom and kaivalya!"

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He initiated Govindan into the ashtakshari mantra (Om Namo Narayanaya), gave him the clothes, etc. and also the following advice: "Kindly repeat the Lord's name incessantly. Do regular and vigorous japa. Forget all that has happened. Only take care that the mind does not run into the old vicious grooves, and that you are not impelled to commit the same mistakes over again. Please read good spiritual books. Do not mix with bad characters. The latent spirituality will become patent through sadhana. Spirituality is latent in you now. If it was not there at all, you would not have come here. I have asked Saswat Swamiji and Purushottamji to accompany you as far as Agra and provide you with all comforts and conveniences during the journey. From Agra you will get a ticket to Salem. Kindly write to me frequently about your welfare and your sadhana. May God bless you!" He then repeated 'Om Namo Narayanaya' several times, and made Govindan also repeat that sacred mantra.

Special dishes were prepared and given to Govindan before his departure. Swamiji then sent a note to the Police Inspector that he did not want to proceed against Govindan in any manner, and that the police might drop the matter from their minds.

In the evening in the Bhajan Hall there was a thanksgiving service and prayer for the long life of Swamiji. The gathering sang the maha mantra in chorus; and the hall was filled with the vibrations of maha mrityunjaya mantra, which was chanted aloud by the entire gathering. Swamiji then distributed prasad with his own hands.

On the 19th February, Swamiji received a letter from Govindan, saying that he had reached Salem safely, he was grateful to Swamiji for what he had done, he prayed that any other pitfalls that may beset his path of life may also be removed by Swamiji's grace, and that he regarded himself as Swamiji's disciple. When Swamiji saw the letter he smiled and said: "Muruganandaji! Put Govindan's name on the Magazine Free List. Include his address in the Prasad Register also. All free literature should be sent to him. I will send him books also. I will write to him to come again."

There were many less dangerous incidents of which Swamiji says in his autobiography: "In the ashram, in the past, a few students with powerful senses and cravings criticised me and abused the ashram and the whole of the Himalayas, and left the place in anger. I blessed them and prayed for light, knowledge and proper understanding and inner spiritual strength for them. But they all go out only to come back to the ashram with a thorough change of heart. I welcome them with great love

and affection. I forget the past quickly. Thus a man may go out a hundred times and come back. My love for the man is greater. It is not through compulsion or rules or regulations that men can be transformed into divine beings. They all must have convincing experiences of their own."

In one of his earliest letters to Swami Paramananda he wrote, "I want around me a number of people who will abuse me, insult me, vilify and injure me. I want to serve them, educate them and transform them." In a crowd he would seek out the bad characters first, whether they be in white or ochre robes, and greet them with folded palms. He would address them in the most respectful terms. About this he said, "Acclaim the rogue as a saint; publicly honour him and he will be ashamed to continue his evil doings. Persistently tell an ill-tempered man, 'You are an embodiment of peace' and he will be ashamed to lose his temper. Call a lazy man a dynamic worker and he will plunge himself into service. But the praise must come from the very bottom of your heart and you must pour your soul force into every word."

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MILESTONES

The All-India Tour

I heard a voice within: "Siva wake up, and fill the cup of your life with this nectar; share it with all. I shall give you strength, energy, power and wisdom." I obeyed His command. He did fill the cup, and I shared it with all.

Swami Sivananda.

The All-India Tour was a direct result of the 'Govindan-incident'. Swami Paramananda was then at Madras, and soon after the incident, in response to an urgent appeal, he returned to the ashram and decided to remain. Recalling the good old days when Swamiji thrilled the hearts of thousands with his lectures and sankirtan, creating a stir wherever he went, Swami Paramananda conceived the idea of an All India Tour to be undertaken by rail. He threw all his energies into organising it in great detail. He had at one time worked with a travelling circus, and the experience gained in regard to the Indian Railways was an invaluable help to him in the efficient organisation of this mammoth task. He wrote to the devotees at various centres and they all responded with great eagerness and enthusiasm.

A first class Tourist Car was hired, and the tour programme drawn up. On the 9th September 1950, just after the Birthday celebrations, Swamiji and a party of thirteen of his disciples left on the All-India Tour. The following members accompanied Swamiji: Swamis Paramananda, Chidananda, Narayananda, Poornabodhananda, Govindananda, Omkarananda, Satyananda, Saswathananda, Venkatesananda and

Dayananda, and Sri Sivaprem, Sri Padmanabhan (later Swami Saradananda) and Sri Purushottham.

Just before the party left the ashram Swamiji outlined the coming mission: "At every railway station we should do kirtan. Millions should know the true significance and meaning of divine life. Wherever we go we should penetrate into the heart of the masses. Leaflets and pamphlets should be distributed in hundreds and thousands. We should disseminate the name of the Lord everywhere so that millions will know the glory of kirtan and Ram nam."



At Rishikesh station

The mission was emphasised further by Swamiji at Hardwar. Paramanandaji had thought of taking him for a car-ride along the Ganges-canal, accompanied by his disciples. On the way, when Swamiji found that they had not taken any books with them for free distribution, he said: "I do not know of a pleasure trip for me! Service gives me the greatest pleasure."

This spirit was evident throughout the whole tour. For instance, Swamiji's attendants were having tea in the compartment as the train wended its way to Lucknow, when suddenly Swamiji entered. He asked each of them if they had slept nicely, etc. Then Paramanandaji enquired of Swamiji if there had been any disturbance. The reply was surprising and revealing: "I slept hardly for fifteen minutes last night. I was anxious lest people who come to see me should be denied their wish."

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"Swamiji!" said Paramanandaji, "We shall send all people into your compartment throughout the day, but from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. Swamiji must have some rest. Therefore we decided not to allow anybody at night to disturb you."

"But I am anxious to see all people who want to see me!" Swamiji admonished. "Don't they sacrifice their rest and come all the way to the station to meet me? Why should I deny them the pleasure?"

When the train came to a halt at Hardoi, people from the platform stampeded into the compartment. No one was able to control them. When Swamiji finally got out of the compartment they sprang forward and caught hold of his feet. Swamiji then gave a talk on discipline. Soon it was announced that the train was about to move. Swamiji got into his compartment, but he was not satisfied; he wanted to give the people something more. He peeped out of the window and said: "Hari Om! All of you repeat the Lord's name with me. The Lord's name contains infinite shakti. It will give you peace, prosperity and happiness." Then he repeated "Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram." The entire gathering responded vigorously. There was a second move for the train to leave. He said: "Do you know your essential nature? Now listen. Chidanand, Chidanand, Chidananda hum, har halme almastha satchidananda hum. This is your real nature. Your nature is knowledge and bliss. You are immortal Atman. Repeat this formula frequently and realise your essential nature."

The train had already started; Swamiji roared through the window: "Om, Om, Om," and the huge gathering that had assembled bowed with joined palms and tear-filled eyes.

At almost every railway station en route hundreds of people came to have his darshan, and wherever the train halted he conducted kirtan on the railway station platform. Even as the train entered the station the loudspeakers fitted on the Tourist Car filled the place with his recorded kirtans and songs and attracted a crowd. Leaflets and pamphlets were distributed.

At Lucknow Swamiji was joyously greeted by a large crowd at the railway station, and the platform itself had been converted into a satsang hall. He proceeded immediately to shower his welcomers with spiritual advice and then sang the *Song of Instructions*:

Bhajo Radhe Govind Radhe Govinda bhajo Radhe Govind, Radhe Govinda bhajo Sita Govind, Hari bolo, bolo bhai Radhe Govind, Hare Krishna Hare Ram Radhe Govind. Get up at 4 a.m. Brahmamuhurta, Get up at 4 a.m. japo Ram Ram, Get up at 4 a.m. do Brahma vichar, Get up at 4 a.m. enquire 'Who am I?' Get up at 4 a.m. practise yogabhyas.

Observe mauna daily for two hours, Fast on ekadasi, take milk and fruits, Study daily one chapter of Gita, Do regular charity, one-tenth income, Rely on your own self, give up servants, Do kirtan at night, have satsang.

Speak the truth at all costs, preserve veerya,
Satyam vada, dharmam cara, observe brahmacarya.
Ahimsa paramo dharma, love one and all,
Never hurt others' feelings, be kind to all,
Control anger by ksama, develop viswa prem.
Keep daily spiritual diary, you will evolve quickly.
(Hare Krishna Hare Ram...)

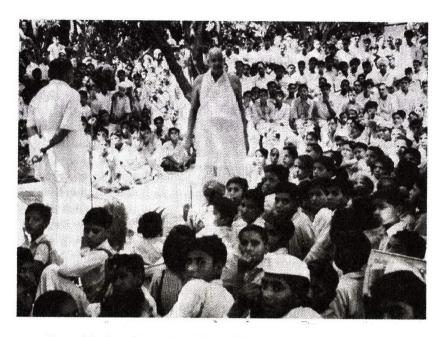
The audience repeated it enthusiastically. Then he said: "This song is not only for repetition. You have to *practice* the instructions. Then only will you realise the benefits."

Many wished to garland him, but the crowds prevented some of them from reaching him. His loving hand reached out to them, took the garland from their hands, and he garlanded himself: he had become one with the devotees. The devotees rejoiced, and Swamiji shared their joy.

The first organised centre was Fyzabad. Here Swamiji addressed the public at the Town (Victoria) Hall, the students of the Boy's High School and the Government Inter-College for women. At the high school he sang his *Song of a Little*:

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Eat a little, drink a little, speak a little, sleep a little,
Mix a little, move a little, serve a little, think a little,
Help a little, give a little, study a little, worship a little,
Do japa a little, do kirtan a little, write mantra a little, reflect a
little,

Do asana a little, pranayama a little, meditate a little, do vichara a little.



One of the boys later said: "Swami Sivananda says that we can drink a little. So we will only drink a *little* alcohol!" Then Swami amended it to 'drink water a little'!

Swami also visited Ayodhya and the actual birth place of Lord Rama, where he addressed a huge gathering of devotees.

In the Town Hall Swamiji noticed the presence of a number of ladies in the gathering. He at once addressed himself to them: "When you do your housework let your hands do the work, but let the mind rest at the lotus feet of the Lord. As you make rotis, sing Jaya Sitaram jaya jaya Sitaram, jaya Sitaram jaya jaya Sitaram. This is an easy sadhana through which you will acquire eternal bliss and also make your home a real Vaikuntha (heaven). It is not necessary to awaken the kundalini through yoga. This is an easy sadhana for you all."

On the way to attend a satsang Swamiji noticed several children standing a little away from the yard where the Tourist Car had been stationed. He went straight to them, taking a basket of bananas. He made them sing the Lord's names in beautiful chorus and distributed the bananas to them.

At Benares Swamiji addressed the public at the Theosophical Society, the Theosophical Lodge, the students of the Benares Hindu University, the Central Hindu School and the Central Girls' School. He also visited Sarnath Buddha Vihara and the most holy Viswanath Mandir, and conducted prayers there. The house in which he stayed (Dr. Kichlu's) was a place of continuous satsang throughout Swamiji's stay. (This was true of every centre during the tour.)

After Swamiji had finished a discourse there, an intelligent-looking college student approached Swamiji and asked: "Swamiji, are we not shirking our duty to the world if we take to the path of nivritti (renunciation) for realisation of the Self? Maybe it is an injustice to our kith and kin."

Swamiji replied, "No. Those who think that they are doing an injustice to the world through their aspirations for Self-realisation have not yet gone above the credulity of childhood. They do not know that the Self which is absolute includes the whole universe, and is far beyond that. There is no shirking of duty here, for to a seeker his kith and kin are not excluded from his perception of Self in all and his service to that Self in all. What is wanted is a changed angle of vision — renunciation of mineness and attachment."

At Benares Hindu University Swamiji imparted his wisdom to the students. He closed the proceedings in true Sivananda style:

Now I will sing some songs. You should also sing with me. You are all my brethren. You are my own Self. There is only one consciousness. These songs will create strong spiritual samskaras in you now. Only those who have strong religious samskaras will join with me:

Chidanand Chidanand Chidanand Hum Har Halme Almastha Satchidanand Hum

You may not wish to repeat this kirtan now, but I have sown the seed and created the samskara in you. When the time comes it will come out and you will start repeating the mantra. You may reject it now, but the impressions are formed in the photographic plate of your mind.

As Swamiji returned to the Tourist Car he was taken to a devotee's house where a young man was lying gravely ill with a serious disease of the spine. Swamiji prescribed several naturopathic remedies as well as massage-treatment, and then said: "I shall now recite the maha mrityunjaya mantra for the health and long life of the boy. I shall also write the mantra and give it to you. Kindly do japa of this mantra. Ask the boy also to do japa of it. He will gain health and long life. It will bestow moksha

(liberation) on him also."

Then he said to the boy: "My child, do not be disheartened. You are in essence immortal diseaseless Atman. Assert this. Recognise this. Feel that you are all-healthy soul, not this diseased body. You will gain immense strength. Don't be nervous. Be patient. You will be alright soon. Repeat Ram-nam incessantly in the mind. May God bless you with health, long life, peace, prosperity and eternal bliss."

With the repetition of the maha mrityunjaya mantra Swamiji massaged the boy's back with his own hands. The boy was visibly moved by this extraordinary kindness, and experienced a new upsurge of strength and power. The mother was in tears as Swamiji left the house.

At midnight, at the end of a very busy day, Swamiji and the disciples returned to the station. On the way Swamiji said:

"I do not feel tired in spite of this strenuous programme from three in the afternoon till midnight. When I sing the Lord's name I get new energy. When I speak of God I feel an inflow of divine power. I never get tired at all. It gives me the greatest joy to propagate the Lord's name."

The following day Swamiji attended a Press Conference. One question was: "Do you think that Westerners can understand the message of vedanta? Do you think they are ready for yoga?"



Swamiji was quick to reply, "Yes, yes. Not only are they ready, but they have already begun to appreciate our message. In fact, there are more yogis and jnanis in the West than in India today! They appreciate the message of India more than we ourselves do. They are more eager to know all about yoga and vedanta than we are. There are several people in Europe who are practising yoga and are advanced students. Harry Dickman of Latvia, Boris Sacharow of Russia, Louis Brinkfort of Denmark, G.C. Nixon of Britain and so many others are experts in yoga. Alexander and Nixon got such inspiration from yoga and vedanta that they have embraced sannyas and settled down in India. We are getting inspiration from them now to learn our own yoga and vedanta!"

To the question: "Is unity of the world possible? Will there be an end to wars?" Swamiji replied: "This is a world of duality. There will always be peace and war, good and evil, happiness and misery. You cannot have perfection in this imperfect world. All that you can do, all that the various avatars of the Lord and the many saints and sages have done is to increase the number of pure men. Only their percentage has changed from time to time. In satya yuga it was more, in kali yuga it is less. That is the only difference. Even in satya yuga there were asuric people, and there were quarrels. The only solution is for the individual to realise the Supreme, which gives supreme peace and perennial joy. Then you will realise that the world of duality does not exist in reality, and that it has only a relative existence."



At Patna Swamiji addressed mammoth public meetings at the Bihar National College, at the Patna University's Senate Hall and at several other places in the city. He gave the first radio talk of the tour from the Patna station of the All-India Radio. He performed an open miracle at the Senate Hall: while discoursing upon the glory of meditation, he roared OM and declared a two-minute mass meditation — twenty thousand people overcrowding the hall sat or stood in 'pin-drop' silence, thoroughly overwhelmed by Swamiji's peace radiations.

While in Patna Swamiji spoke to a devout gathering of men, women and children. A blind business magnate had Swamiji's darshan. Explaining his eye condition to Swamiji, he said: "I cannot see anything now, Swamiji. The sight has gone beyond repair."

"It is all right" said Swamiji. "One-fifth of the world has been destroyed for you. You will soon get the spiritual inner vision. Repeat the Lord's name, cling to His lotus feet. Don't expect your prayers to be answered at once. Buddha did intense tapas for a number of years, but there was no sign of illumination. He became dejected. He was even about to give up sadhana; but in a few hours he attained Buddhahood. Like that, you should not give up your sadhana, japa, kirtan and prayers, whether or not there are indications of the descent of the Lord's grace. Go on with your sadhana. Your prayers are bound to be heard by the Lord one day. God is not giving you little siddhis (major psychic powers) and riddhis (lesser psychic powers), because He wants to give you the supreme experience at once, at one stroke. So be happy and cheerful always. God will bless you."

Early next morning a young devotee of Swamiji's met him and asked: "Swamiji, I am not getting co-operation in my sadhana from the people at home. They always put obstacles in my path. What shall I do?"

Swamiji replied: "Behave like the most worldly of men. Do not reveal your piety, your spiritual bent of mind and your devotion to God. Pretend that you are thoroughly worldly. They should not know that you are spiritually-inclined. Then you will have no opposition from the parents. But internally you must long for God, you must be regular in your sadhana, you must weep in solitude over your separation from God. All difficulties will vanish quickly."

From Patna Swamiji went over to Hajipur in a specially chartered steamer. More than twenty thousand people had crowded into the modest town to pay homage to him. The two-mile-long procession was led by five elephants and thousands of devotees. Swamiji addressed an enormous crowd of thousands in a specially erected pandal in the local school

compound, besides declaring open a Divine Life Library.

At Gaya he addressed public meetings at the Sanskrit Vidyalaya, Ganga Mahal and Jawaharlal Hall, as also the students of the Gaya College. He visited Buddha Gaya (the holy spot where Lord Buddha attained illumination) and Vishnu Pad. He also consecrated a temple at the local Divine Life Society.



Arriving at Calcutta station

For the three days that Swamiji was at Calcutta the entire city reverberated with divine thoughts, and even the European millionaire-businessmen of the city felt happy that they were able to come into direct contact with a dynamic, practical, modern and authoritative interpreter of vedanta as a world religion. He created an indelible impression in the hearts of all who heard him.

During the meeting at the North Calcutta Branch of the Divine Life Society a child began to cry. There was confusion in the audience as some people tried to stop this disturbance by creating more. Gurudev quietened the adults by saying: "Let the child cry; it is also OM. Let him go on singing OM and we shall go on with our work."

Swamiji addressed the public at the Calcutta University's Ashutosh Hall, Vishuddhananda Sarasvati Vidyalaya, Sita Ram Mandir, Bharati Tamil Sangham and the Divine Life Society's North Calcutta Branch. He also met His Holiness the Sankaracharya of Puri.

The Calcutta Station of All-India Radio broadcast Swamiji's own vedantic hymns.

On the 25th September the train reached Waltair. On this one day Swamiji addressed the public at the Town Hall and the Prema Samajan, and the students of the Andhra University. After he had talked to the students he felt that they should witness a yoga asana demonstration and movie films from the ashram. The asana demonstration was in progress and someone had gone to the railway station to get the movie equipment, when it was suggested to Swamiji that he should proceed to the next engagement at the Town Hall. To everyone's surprise he remarked: "I am not coming. The students and I have become friends. Let the Town Hall people wait." This had a magic effect on the students; they would not forget him nor what he told them. All waited patiently and in an orderly manner till the movie equipment arrived.

At the next stop, Rajamundry, Swamiji addressed the public at the Government Arts College, Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, the Seva Sadan Sanskrit Girls' School and the Rajahmundry Municipal Office (where a Civic Address — the first of the Tour — was presented to him). This was the first centre during the Tour where a grand ceremonial procession had been arranged. Swamiji bathed in the river Godavari. He also visited the Gotami Jivakarunya Ashram.

From Rajahmundry a specially chartered steam-launch bore Swamiji and party across the sacred Godavari river to Kovvur. Over 10,000 people from all over the district created a festive atmosphere at Kovvur.
Standing on the rear seat of the flower-bedecked car, Swamiji gave darshan to the multitude. The crawling car took the longest route through the
town, enabling the maximum number of people to have his darshan at
their very doors. The crowning glory of the Kovvur programme was the
spectacular pada-puja, when thousands of devotees offered flowers and
fruits (symbolising the offering of their hearts and souls at the feet of the
sage), sang the Lord's names with him and received initiation from him.
They then returned to their homes laden with rich blessings, a light heart,
peaceful mind and blissful soul. The worship of a God-realised saint, one
of the few remnants of India's spiritual heritage, formed an inspiring
spectacle at all the centres of the tour, bespeaking the Indian's undying
faith in God.

The twenty-four hour stay at Vijayawada was a demonstration of Swamiji's supreme self-sacrificing service. His physical condition worried everyone but himself, but his mighty will silenced all pleadings for rest. Many people had his satsang at the house where he stayed; he addressed three public meetings at the local college, Kothakudi Temple and Ram Mohan Library; he broadcast a talk over the local radio station of the All

India Radio and visited the Sanskrit Vidyapith.

It was impossible to estimate the impact that Swamiji's memorable visit had on the people of Madras. It belied the popular fear that religion had disappeared from the cities of India. For the four days of Swamiji's stay, on everyone's lips was the name 'Sivananda' and in everyone's heart was the divine life message. Every child was singing the popular 'Eat a Little' song. Even the poor and the down-trodden felt that they, too, had a friend and that they, too, were blessed.

Swamiji's thundering exhortation — that man should respect man and forget all distinctions and pull down all barriers, that equal vision should be restored to all eyes — had a miraculous effect on the attitude of the citizens of Madras.

Swamiji arrived at the Central Railway Station in Madras at 7.30 a.m. He was greeted by the thunderous cheers of the thousands of disciples, devotees and admirers who had gathered there since early morning. After being garlanded profusely, he was taken in the magnificently decorated procession-car, to the accompaniment of nagaswaram and band music.



The four days were packed with engagements.

Swamiji's first stop was the Parthasarathy temple where he offered worship. At 3.00 p.m. he visited the George Town branch of the Divine Life Society. Soon after this he went to the Ripon Buildings for the Civic Reception given in honour of his visit. The same evening he addressed the members of the Southern Indian Journalists' Federation at its club premises.

During the morning and in the early afternoon thousands had his darshan. At the close of this very busy day, when he was asked to grace a benefit performance arranged in aid of the Kattupakkam Sivananda Sevashram, he did not hesitate to accept. They only asked for his presence, but Swamiji gave them the nectar of his wisdom too. Once the torrent of words commenced he himself found it difficult to stop. Referring to this he once remarked: "When I stand up to address a gathering I identify myself with all. I love every member of the audience. I feel that I must give them my heart — all of it — without reservation. Till I am satisfied that I have served them to my entire satisfaction, I cannot stop."

On Sunday the 1st October the day began with a visit to the temples of Lord Kesavaperumal and Lord Kapalisvara at Mylapore, where he worshipped the deities. From there he visited the Triplicane branch of the Divine Life Society. From 9 a.m. to nearly 1.30 p.m. thousands performed pada puja to him. He then visited the Park Town branch of the Divine Life Society and also the Srinivasa-Gandhi Nilayam. From there he went to the Madras International Fellowship, where he addressed the members.

Two thermos flasks filled with apple juice and orange juice were always carried in the car when Swamiji's programme meant that he had to go from place to place without returning to where he was staying, so that he could have some refreshment before and after the meetings. On the way to the next venue at the Museum Theatre it was found that both flasks were empty. It was after 8 p.m. The disciples travelling in the car with him suggested that they would have the flask filled when he reached the platform. Swamiji said: "No. Driver, please stop. Let us go and have something to drink. There must be a kiosk somewhere where we can get some soft drink. We will go there and get some lemonade or anything. The body must have some petrol." The driver went to the nearest shop and bought lemonade. Swamiji drank two bottles and went to the meeting where, after the chairman had read the Welcome Address (and presented it to him enclosed in a silver casket) and a few of the hundreds of messages received from eminent men had been read out, Swamiji gave one of the most soul-stirring speeches ever heard since Mahatma Gandhi's last visit to Madras. After this meeting Swamiji conducted sankirtan under the

auspices of the All-India Sai Samaj at Mylapore until nearly 10.30 p.m.

Monday the 2nd October was also a day of crowded programmes. At 7.30 he addressed the members of the Shivaji Vyayam mandal, at 9.30 he paid a visit to the Hindu Theological College and at 11 a.m. the Divine Life Society branch at Purasawalkam was sanctified by his visit. He visited the National Girls' School at Triplicane at 2.45 p.m. and at 4 p.m. he delivered Gandhiji's birthday Address at George Town. At 6.00 p.m. thousands listened in rapt attention to the 'Message of Vedanta to the Modern World,' which was the subject of his speech delivered under the auspices of the Madras Philosophy Association. At 7.45 p.m. he presided over a discourse by Sri K.S. Ramaswami Sastri at Gandhinagar, Adyar.

On Tuesday, the last day at Madras, Swamiji visited the Kalakshetra at Adyar, where he spent a pleasant and peaceful two hours. From there he went to the Theosophical Society and then to Avvai Home, also at Adyar. In the afternoon he visited the office of *My Magazine*, where a Welcome Address on behalf of the editor and staff was presented to him. (Swamiji was connected with *My Magazine* from 1931, when his first article appeared in its pages, and continued without a break for over 20 years.)

The strain of continuous talking, lecturing and singing, which had already begun to tell on Swamiji's health — particularly his ears, nose and throat — had reached its climax at Madras. By the last day talking had become almost impossible. Every ten minutes Swamiji suffered an extremely painful form of cough which frightened those who were sitting near him; but when news came that there was a huge gathering waiting his arrival at Vani Mahal he at once asked to be taken there. "After a little rest, Swamiji," said someone. "No, no rest for me now. When people are waiting there for me, who can think of resting here?" he replied.

When Swamiji arrived at Vani Mahal there was a mammoth gathering to greet him outside the hall. The hall could only accommodate a few thousand, and the crowd outside was estimated as at least 10,000.

Many important people were on the platform. The organisers knew the state of Swamiji's health, and were anxious to prevent further deterioration; they were therefore trying to dissuade him from exerting himself further. But once Swamiji saw that huge crowd gathered before him no one could check him. He poured forth his heart for 50 minutes. It was here for the first time that he needed the microphone. Even those sitting on the dias could scarcely hear him. He clung to the microphone, which not only amplified his voice, but helped him to stand. The

organisers saw that even standing with this support was a strain on Swamiji, so they requested him to stop, or at least to sit down and speak. But Swamiji would not listen. "No, if I sit down and talk I will not be able to speak with as much feeling as I can standing up. Now I can see them and they can see me," he said.

After the discourse a movie film of yoga asanas and the activities at Ananda Kutir was shown. Swamiji had a brief rest and then the entire party was taken to the Egmore railway station where, amidst the cheers of the thousands gathered there, he boarded the tourist saloon attached to the 10.25 p.m. train.

The amount of physical strain that Swamiji's body had undergone in Madras was realised only when he reached Villapuram. Here the organiser, seeing the state of Swamiji's health, provided ample rest for him; and the devotees contented themselves with his darshan as he was taken round the town in a grand procession from the railway station.

The next day Swamiji travelled to Chidambaram, where he addressed the students and staff of the Annamalai University and the public of Chidambaram at the Shanmuga Vilas. While there he met Maharishi Shuddhananda Bharatiar at the temple of Lord Nataraj.

From the 5th to 7th of October Swamiji visited Mayuram. H.H. Mahasannidhanam of the Dharmapuram Ashram showered Swamiji with loving attention, and Swamiji's stay at Dharmapuram infused fresh energy, vigour and spirit into his ailing body, enabling it to be equal to his zeal for selfless service.

The procession from the Mayuram railway station to the ashram was a great marvel! It was like the procession of a deity.

Swamiji addressed the public of Mayuram at the Municipal Office (where he was accorded a Civic Reception) and at the Dharmapuram ashram. His speech was tape-recorded for the first time here, and played back before another gathering held the next day in honour of Yogi Shuddhananda Bharatiar, who had come again from Chidambaram to meet Swamiji. Swamiji also visited a number of temples, where he was received with great honour.

On the 7th October Swamiji reached Tanjore which, because of his ill-health and exhaustion, followed the example of Villapuram and contented itself with a spectacular procession along the main roads and a pada puja. The loving care which the organisers bestowed upon Swamiji was praiseworthy.

Swamiji gave darshan to devotees at the Shankara Ashram where the pada puja was performed: the Tanjore Municipality's proposed Civic

Reception had to be cancelled on account of Swamiji's indisposition.

Leaving Tanjore after only a brief stay of two hours, Swamiji reached Trichinopoly a day earlier than planned, so few people knew that Swamiji was travelling by that train. But the devotees were clever. They were constantly in touch with the railway station staff and found out about the changes in programme. They were waiting to greet Swamiji at every station en route and at the railway station at Trichinopoly. It was at Trichinopoly that Swamiji had studied (at the S.P.G College). As he was driven to the house of his host, Swamiji recalled familiar sights and events of his youth. (His reminiscent mood continued until his birthplace was reached.)

Swamiji had complete rest here until the following morning at 4 a.m when the programme commenced. At 9 a.m. there was a two-mile-long procession along the main roads of Trichinopoly, with Swamiji in a decorated car. Three elephants headed the procession and there were nagaswaram, bands and singing parties on both sides of the car. At a hundred places the procession was stopped, and at a hundred places Swamiji was garlanded. When the procession reached the school where a reception had been arranged, thousands had Swamiji's darshan. It became almost impossible to control the huge crowd that rushed towards him.

There were several huge public functions in Trichinopoly, but the numbers present at the National College dismayed all. There were about 50,000 people assembled to hear Swamiji in an open-air meeting. Because it was threatening to rain, when the organisers started to read the twelve Welcome Addresses from various organisations the crowd became restive, wanting to hear from Swamiji direct. As Swamiji started to speak the rain started, but the entire crowd stood still and there was perfect silence. They were so intent on listening to him that they did not even notice that they were getting drenched by the rain.

At Trichinopoly Swamiji was examined by some eminent doctors whose unanimous diagnosis was that Swamiji had an enlarged heart (cardiac hypertrophy): their prescription — complete rest — was unpalatable to him, however, and he therefore did not take it.

When leaving Trichinopoly the next day Swamiji and party had to be taken through the underground passage to the platform on which his train stood, otherwise it would have been impossible for him to reach his carriage through the crowd. When the train steamed out of the station the traffic inspector gave orders for the train to proceed slowly so that the thousands who were lining the platforms could have Swamiji's darshan.

At Pudukkottai he was given a Civic Reception by the Municipality, and addressed the public there. More than 10,000 people had his darshan. On the way to Chettinad he halted at Arimalam to pay his homage to a sage-ancestor of his — Sri Sundara Swamigal — whose samadhi is situated at Arimalam.

At Chettinad Swamiji addressed the public and also held a Press Conference. From Chettinad he travelled to Rameswaram. The 11th October was the holy Mahalaya Amavasya day, so after a grand puja to Lord Ramalingeswara he offered the holy water of the Ganges in abhishekam. (This water had been brought all the way from Gangotri — 2000 miles away — for this purpose.) Swamiji also addressed a public meeting in the temple.

Here there was an interesting duel between Swamiji's humility and public devotion. A palanquin awaited to take him to the temple; but he would not ride on the shoulders of other human beings. The organisers pleaded, so to satisfy their devotion he rode the palanquin for a few yards; and then in obedience to his insistent demand they let him travel to the temple in a bullock cart. (Swami Paramananda had planned the tour in such a way that Swamiji would experience all modes of transport — the tourist saloon, boats, planes, cars — and this unexpected turn of events added the bullock cart to the list.)

During the few hours that he spent at Dhanushkodi on his way to Ceylon, Swamiji addressed a meeting of the Branch of the Divine Life Society before he boarded S.S. Goschen, the ship which took him to Ceylon. Sri Lanka accorded a royal reception to Swamiji. He was greeted with all the honour due to a foreign ruler; but quickly the people forgot all distinctions of nationality and man-made boundaries, enthroned him in their hearts and bowed to him in the supreme oneness of love.

A vast crowd had assembled at Talaimannar Pier to welcome Swamiji as he stepped onto the soil of Ceylon from the Dhanushkody steamer. Many of them had travelled from distant Trincomalie, Jaffna, Colombo etc., to join that first reception.

At 8.05 a.m. on October 12 1950 Swamiji arrived at Colombo Fort Railway Station, which was decorated like a temple. Thousands of devotees and admirers had collected from the early hours. 'Haro Hara' and guru namavali greeted him as he alighted from the train. He was received with traditional ceremonies and garlanded by the mayor of the city and the chairman of the reception committee. He stood for a few minutes on a specially-erected dais to enable the vast crowd to have his darshan, and later walked with them to the main entrance so that the

thousands who had assembled there could see him. Outside Colombo Railway Station the mayor's car was waiting and Swamiji boarded it. Mounted police kept the crowd from rushing at the car. (The entire reception was filmed by the Government of Ceylon.) In front was a police pilot car with a loudspeaker fitted to it to clear the road. In the mayor's car was Swamiji and Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan. Behind were two policemen on a motor-cycle. The mayor's driver explained that this extraordinary privilege of police pilot escort was granted only to governors and high officials of foreign governments, and world leaders.

Swamiji addressed the public at the Town Hall, the Corporation, the University, the Ramakrishna Mission, Thambiah Mudalaar Chatram, Saiva Mangayar Kalagam and the Vivekananda Society.



A section of one of the crowds in Ceylon

The Corporation gave him a Civic Reception, which was also attended by the Prime Minister of Ceylon, the Rt. Hon. D.S. Senanayake. Swamiji was presented with a novel Welcome Address on palm leaves and his Town Hall speech was relayed by Radio Ceylon. He visited the local shrine, as also the Kelaniya Buddha Vihara.

Later, at the home of Srimathi Sivanandam Tambyah, Swamiji granted interviews to many men and women. To one group he said:

There are four types of human beings: the active, the emotional, the mystic and the intellectual. The seers have therefore evolved

four paths — karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga — to enable the pecple of the four temperaments to reach the goal, Atma-jnana.

Everyone is endowed with all four, but one aspect is predominant in each. Therefore the yoga of synthesis, with a stress on one system, is the most suitable yoga for the present age. This yoga of synthesis develops you harmoniously...

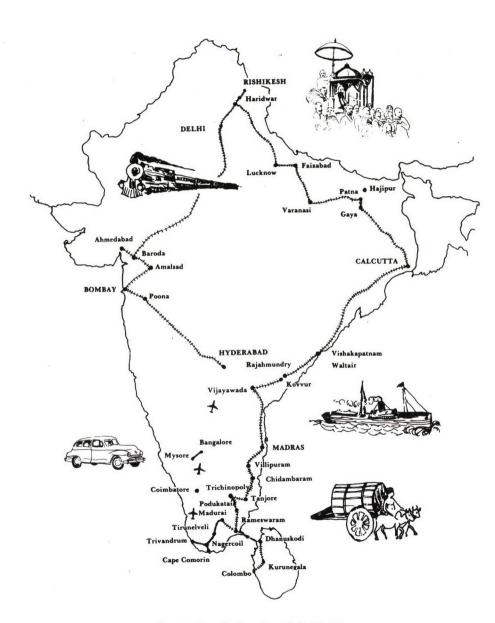
The fruit of selfless service is jnana. Selfless service is most essential...

You should meditate regularly at a particular hour of the day. Then the meditative mood will come by itself at that hour. Besides, you should keep up the meditative mood throughout the day, by gradual extension. Then you will be tranquil, peaceful, happy and balanced. You will be able to turn out more work more efficiently. Have a concrete or abstract background of thought. This will help you to keep up the meditative mood throughout the day. You will soon attain the light of knowledge.

After satsang held at the Tambyah Chatiram Swamiji was taken to Dr. Kumaran's private hospital, where he was examined by a specialist. Tests of urine revealed 2.5 per cent sugar. Dr. Kumaran and his brother were astonished how Swamiji, with such a high percentage of sugar, could withstand the strain of travel. In fact it was a matter of wonder to those who had been watching Swamiji while at Rishikesh. There he used to complain of giddiness even to go up the hill occasionally; once a week was an impossibility, and going up to the office twice a day from his kutir, hardly a hundred yards away, was getting more and more tiring. Swamiji, who had never before used a walking stick, had of late to use one, as while walking in the street he often felt giddy. Yet he had been able to stand the strain of a month's tour with a crowded programme everywhere. When this was mentioned to him Swamiji quietly remarked: "It is all His grace."

At every meeting students and statesmen, mayors and ministers, Hindus and Buddhists, gentry and peasantry listened to Swamiji spell-bound. Colombo was the apex of the tour. The people of Ceylon lost their hearts to Swamiji; and their devotion, piety and love of God and divine life left an indelible impression in Swamiji's heart.

A big police force was at the railway station on Swamiji's departure, holding back the crowds and providing a clear way for the car to go right up to the platform where Swamiji's coach lay. The parting from the



Route taken during the All India Tour

crowds gathered there was touching, as many began to weep as Swamiji stood at the open door as the train moved from the station.

At 5 a.m. the next morning the train reached Kurunegala station. Some members of the tour group were fast asleep — tired out by the strenuous trip and the programme of the previous day. There was sweet kirtan and bhajan on the platform. Mrs. Nityalakshmi Tambiraj and her daughters were on the platform singing. Swamiji saluted the devotees and then, recognising Mrs. Tambiraja, said: "Nowadays you are not writing to me. Previously you used to write to me regularly about your sadhana and progress." Mrs. Tambiraja promised to be more regular in future. She flooded the compartment with tea, biscuits, toast, milk and fruits for the entire party.

On his return to India Swamiji again addressed a public meeting, at Dhanushkodi. That night there was heavy rain — the first for four years.

At Madurai the procession was a marvel. There was a nagarswaran party, and Swamiji was taken in a four-wheeled coach accompanied by two baby elephants with golden headgear. Then there was an orderly darshan. For three hours Swamiji sat as the devotees filed past.

Swamiji addressed the public at Sourashtra secondary school hall, Sethupathy high school and the Meenakshi Temple. The crowd that listened to Swamiji at the Meenakshi Temple was estimated at fifty thousand.

At Virudhunagar Swamiji had time only to drive along the main streets, therefore a colourful procession had been arranged. His coach was stopped at twenty-five places, where a number of institutions presented him with Addresses of Welcome. He visited the local temple for a couple of minutes and addressed the public there.

After about thirty years, Swamiji visited his hometown — Tirunelveli — which he had left as a layman. Touching scenes of love and reverence marked the two eventful days he spent with his relations. Swamiji addressed the public at the Hindu College and the Centenary Hall (where he was presented with an address by a Muslim-devotee).

At Pattamadai, the place of his birth, Swamiji was received with great love and enthusiasm. He motored to Pattamadai from Tirunelveli en route to Nagercoil. He addressed the public at the Pattamadai High School.

Swamiji was taken round the streets of Nagercoil in an illuminated chariot, to the accompaniment of nagarswaran and kirtan parties. On the second morning he went to Cape Comorin, worshipped Kanya Kumari, had a bath in the sea (where three oceans meet), visited the Suchindram

temple and Mahadanapuram. In the afternoon he returned to Nagercoil, where he addressed a large gathering. There was some confusion at the meeting, and the organiser declared: "If you are all well-behaved, Swamiji will be pleased."

"Irrespective of how you behave," said Swamiji, "I shall always be pleased, and take with me a wonderful impression of my visit to Nagercoil."

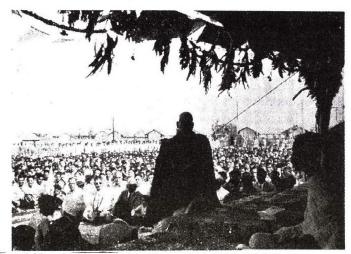
This had an immediate magical effect on the crowd.

At Trivandrum those who witnessed the unforgettable sight of H.H. the Rajpramukh of Travancore-Cochin welcoming Sage Sivananda into his palace were transported into another era altogether. It was as though King Janaka himself was welcoming sage Yajnavalkya to his durbar. On the 18th Swamiji addressed the public meeting at the Town Hall. On the 19th he visited the famous Padmanabha Swami temple, lunched at the palace and conducted kirtan there. When he took leave of the royal family the palace was still resounding with Swamiji's sankirtan and the tunes of his philosophical songs.

From Trivandrum Swamiji flew to Bangalore. There was a short but impressive reception at Coimbatore airport en route.

There was a big crowd at the Bangalore airport to receive Swamiji on the 19th October. He addressed a meeting of 8,000 devotees at the airport itself. From Bangalore airport he went to Mysore, where he was accommodated in the Sanskrit College. From there he went to the palace of the Maharajah of Mysore, and spent that evening and the next day there before returning to Bangalore, where he stayed at the Raja Bandhu palace. The people of Bangalore flocked to hear him in their tens of thousands, and in spite of the huge crowds the programmes were carried through smoothly and successfully, thanks to the hard working organisers at the R.B.A.N.M.'s High School; S.S. Sataka Mandali (who specially staged a drama on Ambarisha's life in honour of Swamiji's visit); Ram Mandir; E.M.E. Centre, Jalahalli; the Bangalore Corporation (where he was given a Civic Reception); and also several branches of the Divine Life Society.

At Jalahalli Swami addressed a huge gathering of officers and men of the armed services, arranged by Col. R.M. Newton-King. At the very outset of his inspiring ninety-minute address to the men, Swamiji appealed to their higher sentiments. He said: "You are all powerful, strong men, full of vim, vigour and vitality. Your OM-chanting also should be powerful and strong. OM is a great purifier. OM-chanting will infuse power into you and it will tranquilise your mind." This had a marvellous effect.



Addressing the armed services at Jalahalli E.M.E. Centre

The OM that arose from the mammoth gathering rent the air. After maha mantra kirtan, Swamiji continued: "... The world cannot give you satisfaction. You are bound to it by strong bonds of desires. Desire is your real enemy. Desire has robbed you of real independence. Desire has enslaved you. You must arm yourself with the powerful weapons of discrimination and dispassion. Long for liberation, and fight this dire enemy within... Even a world-war may last only for a few years, but this inner warfare with ignorance, desire and other evils, might last several lives. By diligence and perseverance, as also by intense application, you can bring victory within easy reach and realise God this very moment. The inner enemy is the most powerful; you must adopt various methods to subdue him. Therefore one needs the combined method of japa, kirtan, meditation, study of religious books, satsang, introspection, selfless service — all these will help you to eradicate the vices that lurk in you and to cultivate virtuous qualities."

Arriving at the Hyderabad airport on the 23rd Swamiji was welcomed by a crowd of over five thousand. In the afternoon he addressed the students of the Osmania University, the Mahbub College and the Nizam's College. These meetings were also attended by the members of the public.

After the discourse at the College it was very difficult to rescue Swamiji from the crowd of enthusiastic people who thronged around him. However the gathering at the Siva temple, which was the next stop, was even more difficult. So many people pressed around the main entrance

that Swamiji was taken by the organisers through a side entrance. When he left, because the crowd was becoming unmanageable, he was taken out quietly through a corridor. The public who 'smelt' this rushed to meet Swamiji half way. The joy of those who managed to touch his feet in spite of the rush could be measured by the tears which streamed down their faces. To them, touching his feet was the greatest blessing.

After this incredibly tight programme Swamiji and company returned to Pratapgiri Koti, which had been put at Swamiji's disposal by the Raja of Pratapgiri. Completely exhausted and worn-out, he ascended the staircase; he was short of breath and had to take rest every few steps. All his physical energy had been poured out at various meetings that afternoon. No one who saw him dance on the various platforms could have believed that he could ever gasp while ascending a few steps. He turned to Paramanandaji and said: "I shall not be able to move an inch from here. Kindly take me back at once to Rishikesh. Please cancel further tour programme."

And he went into the room upstairs.

After half an hour, as per the printed programme, the evening sankirtan started on the lawns of Pratapgiri Koti. Paramanandaji had requested Swamiji not to attend this function, but to take complete rest; and had assured him that the other members of the party would conduct the sankirtan. But, no, Swamiji was the first to go! The entire programme was his own sankirtan and discourse on sankirtan.

Those who had seen Swamiji as he went up the stairs a few minutes prior to this and who had heard him say that he wanted to return to Rishikesh at once, were astounded to see him at the meeting.

This was his own lila (divine play). Swamiji more often taught by example than by precept. By this supreme manifestation of his own gigantic will he demonstrated how a sadhaka should drill his mind to bring it under his perfect control. If the mind craves for rest and leisure, if it doesn't want to take delight in the service of others, in singing kirtan, in swadhyaya or in sadhana, refuse to bow to it. Make it your obedient servant.

The next day, after barely four hours sleep, Swamiji broadcast a talk on the significance of Durga Puja over the Hyderabad station of All India Radio, and also visited the Gowlipura branch of the Divine Life Society where he declared open a charitable dispensary.

On the 25th October Swamiji's party travelled to Poona by train. Poona was not on the original itinerary, and yet even at short notice a full programme was efficiently organised and a huge crowd had assembled at

the railway station. Swamiji addressed several meetings here: at Saraswati Vidyalaya, the Malaria Institute, St. Mira's High School, Dr. Viswanathan's house, Kirkee Branch of the Divine Life Society, Tilak Mandir and Saidas Mandal. He also visited Jnanadev's Samadhi at Alandi.

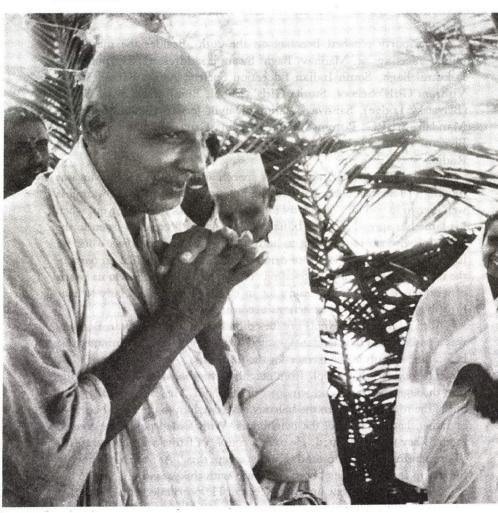
The party reached Bombay on the 26th. Besides the mammoth public meeting at Madhav Bagh Swamiji addressed the public at Lakshmi Bagh, South Indian Education Society, Astika Samaj, Vanita Vishram Girls' School, Sunita Girls' School, Bombay Spiritual Centre (Blavatsky Lodge), Sannyas Ashram, Daivik Jeevan Chaitanya Prabha Mandali, Sri P.G. Purohit's house in Santa Cruz and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. He also broadcast a talk over the Bombay station of All-India Radio.

Justice Bhagavati's introductory speech at the Bharatiya Bhavan was moving: "The vast audience I see here is proof positive that Swamiji is well known to you all. Who am I to say anything about him to you, when his fame has spread all over India and you have all come to listen to the words of wisdom he is going to address to you? In these days when we have gone to the very depths of demoralisation it is really like an oasis in the desert to find saints like Swamiji coming to us, to address to us words of wisdom. It is really necessary for us to hear him — not only to hear him, but also to shape our actions accordingly."

One of the main events organised on Swamiji's last day in Bombay was a pada puja. His attendants wanted Swamiji to take a few minutes rest before he went up to the terrace for the pada puja. As he was about to lie down he noticed that people from neighbouring balconies were watching him through the doors and windows of his room. He got up and stepped out of the room, and from the balcony gave darshan to the neighbours—or rather, had darshan of the neighbours. With folded palms he greeted them. They were delighted. He took a couple of fruits and showed them: "I am sending you this prasad. Kindly accept this." At once a member of the group ran to the neighbouring house with the prasad.

Then Swamiji went up to the terrace. He proceeded straight to that side which was nearest the road, stood up on the platform which had been placed there (and from which Atmanandaji was doing kirtan) and began to address the gathering. There were about 1,000 people on the road, all standing in the sun eager to listen to Swamiji and to have his darshan.

"You see I am turning towards you all and doing kirtan. These people on the terrace are comfortably seated. But you are standing in the hot sun. You do not mind the inconvenience caused to you. You are full of devotion to the Lord and faith in Him. You are eager to listen to spiritual discourses, to do sankirtan of the Lord's name. You are all very dear to me."



On the way to Baroda from Bombay fifteen thousand people from a radius of over fifty miles had gathered at Amalsad (a small town) to have Swamiji's darshan and spiritual instruction. Special trains had to be run by the railways to deal with the situation. The public meeting was held in the school grounds. When Swamiji found that a crowd had collected at the railway station in the evening, he conducted a satsang there as well.

At Baroda Swamiji addressed the public at the Town Hall and also conducted satsang at the Vitthala Mandir. On the 1st November he inaugurated a branch of the Divine Life Society there, saying: "I declare open this branch of the Divine Life Society. The Divine Life Society is a universal institution. It has no pet dogma or secret doctrine. Anybody can join as a member of the Society. Throughout Europe and America there are also branches. Christians, Mohammedans, Parsis, Germans and Frenchmen are members of the Society... Some people show great interest and much enthusiasm in the beginning. Gradually they lose interest and the work they take up becomes almost extinct! You should not be like that... The Secretary and the President and other workers should develop adaptability. You must be able to adapt with everybody. Then only will the institution flourish and there will be whole-hearted cooperation from the public."

Next stop was Ahmedabad, where Swamiji addressed a public meeting at Premabai Hall and held two satsangs at the Gita Mandir; he also visited the Sabarmati Ashram of Mahatma Gandhiji and addressed the inmates there. He gave an interview to the press reporters. After he had answered all the reporter's questions he summed up his own teachings:

Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise, Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate. Adapt, adjust, accommodate, Bear insult, bear injury — highest sadhana. Enquire 'Who am I?' know the Self, and be free.

Bear insult, bear injury; this is the highest sadhana. One harsh word upsets you, brings about blood-shot eyes and you at once react to it, saying; "Do you know who I am?" You are not able to control yourself in spite of your boasted intellect. You should learn to bear insult and injury with equanimity, thinking 'these are only sound vibrations in the ether'. This demands perfect pulverisation of the ego. You should enquire 'Who am I?', 'Who is abused by whom?' and thus utilise every occasion when you are insulted as very good opportunities for introspection, enquiry and spiritual progress.

Just as in the Gita the Lord has enumerated certain fundamental virtues which an aspirant should possess in an abundant measure for quick spiritual progress, I have selected eighteen fundamental

virtues and put them in English song-form for the benefit of students. You will like it immensely:

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,
Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
Charity, generosity, purity.
Practise daily these eighteen 'ities,
You will soon attain immortality.
Brahman is the only real entity,
Mr So-and-so is a false non-entity.
You will abide in Infinity and Eternity,
You will behold unity in diversity.
You cannot attain this in the university,
You will attain it in the forest-university.

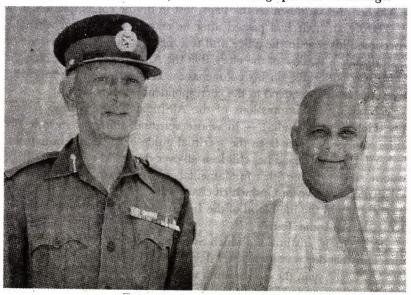
Swamiji reached New Delhi on the 4th November. He was received at the 'Victory Platform' at the New Delhi railway station by a crowd which even a well-organised cordon of Scouts could not control. The public reception on the 5th was presided over by the Chief Justice of India, Sri Justice Patanjali Sastri, and addressed by several dignitaries. Besides this he lectured at Birla Mandir Hall, Sanathana Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha, Yoga Ashram, Delhi University, Lodi Colony, Salwan School and the Y.M.C.A. At the Birla Mandir and the Sanathana Dharma Prainidhi Sabha he addressed a meeting every day of his stay. He also gave a talk over the All-India Radio, Delhi station.

Swamiji visited the Rajghat Samadhi of Mahatma Gandiji and also Birla House where the Mahatma was assassinated. He offered prayers at both these places.

The great spiritual leader, Sri Goswami Ganesh Dutt, said: "What a miracle! This one sadhu, by his mere presence in the capital of India, has transformed the entire atmosphere of New Delhi." Justice Patanjali Sastri said: "You have seen through intuitive insight where the need lay, and you have started this work of spiritual dissemination of knowledge. It is a gigantic task."

A special feature of Swamiji's stay in New Delhi was visits to the houses of devotees (including the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, General K.J. Cariappa), where he conducted brief satsang. After

one of these he remarked: "I do not think that the highly publicised and organised tour like the one we have had is as effective as these house-to-house visits and satsangs. We should have a station-wagon in which we should go from village to village and conduct house-to-house satsang. That is the most effective way of disseminating spiritual knowledge."



With General K. J. Cariappa

After two months of the most intense service, during the most extensive and exciting tour of India and Ceylon, and after effecting an unprecedented nation-wide spiritual awakening, Sri Swamiji returned to his abode on the bank of the Ganges. His countenance remained calm as the ocean-depths; the huge waves of spiritual currents that had emanated from him had flooded the country with wisdom but had not exhausted him — not even his physical frame! The mahatmas of Rishikesh read in his blissful face and sparkling eyes his eloquent message: "Service enables you to draw power, joy and strength from the inexhaustible Cosmic Source."

The grandeur of the Rishikesh reception was equalled only by the loving anxiety with which the men, women and children of Rishikesh, who had made Swamiji their own during the past twenty-five years, welcomed him — proud of his superhuman achievements and happy at his safe return in perfect health. When they parted from him two months before, they wept; when he returned to them, they shed tears of joy.

At the ashram his disciples welcomed him back to his own abode. They rushed to greet him, to garland him and to touch his feet. A procession took him back to the ashram. After exactly two months Swamiji re-entered his kutir on the bank of the Ganges. Quickly he divested himself of his overcoat and rushed to the Ganges. He worshipped the Mother and sat down on the steps, lost in divine contemplation.

Hardly an hour had passed after he entered the ashram when he re-occupied his seat in the office and resumed his duties. Not a trace of the strain nor a shadow of the glory that the All-India Tour had brought to him was noticeable on his countenance. He conducted the morning prayer and began to attend to the correspondence on his table.

Recording his impressions of the All-India Tour, Swamiji wrote: "The Holy Bharat (India) — in whose spiritual affinity I include Sri Lanka also — has ever been the spiritual guide of the entire humanity. Mother India has nursed her children all over the world with the milk of wisdom. That wisdom, that fundamental spirituality, that aspiration for the Eternal, that love for God which characterised the peoples of the vedic era, still runs in the life-blood of the Indian today. That is what I found during the All-India Tour."

To the many institutions which Swamiji had visited during the All-India Tour that day was a red-letter day: and they put it on their religious calendar. Every year, the day Swamiji visited their institution is observed by them as Sivananda Vijaya Jayanthi, the anniversary of Swamiji's visit. Thus, the Tour had been made a source of permanent inspiration.

There is not the slightest doubt that Swamiji's epoch-making tour not only brought about a very great spiritual awakening in the country but also helped the Divine Life Society's establishment on a firmer foundation. The mission had a sudden fillip: all at once thousands of people came into Swamiji's contact; the Society's income increased, and with it work and debts! That was Swamiji's miracle — the miracle of perpetual self-sacrificing service.

The Parliament of Religions

From the time that Swami Paramananda announced the intention of convening a Parliament of Religions, Swamiji enthusiastically supported him and encouraged him in every way, saying, "Kindly do not get discouraged when some obstacles crop up. Everything will be crowned with success."

The Parliament met on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of April, 1953. It was an event of unprecedented magnitude, rejoicing and spiritual fervour. The

ashram became a busy township, and there was a festive mood in the atmosphere from the 1st of April, 1953. The chairman of the reception committee (Sri N.C. Ghosh, M.A.) and Swami Paramanandaji, the prime mover, were busy giving final touches to the programme. On the evening of the 2nd all the delegates had arrived: the team of selfless workers of the ashram had been geared to the most intense service receiving, accommodating and attending to the countless guests who kept on coming. It was on such rare occasions that the wonderful spirit that Swamiji infused into the workers of the ashram revealed itself. These swamis and sadhaks, accustomed to a quiet life devoted to their sadhana and guru-seva (service to the guru), instantly and spontaneously transformed themselves into human machines and plunged into service. Each took his place without any prompting, doing his duty flawlessly and shouldering any burden ungrudgingly. Swamiji trained by personal example, not by sermons (which are almost always ineffective). The following is the Press Trust of India report on the three-day session of the Parliament:

The three-day Parliament of Religions, attended by over 200 delegates representing all important religions, was inaugurated here (at Rishikesh) today by Sri C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar at the Sivananda Ashram on the bank of the Ganges.



Swamiji arriving to inaugurate the proceedings

Sixty-seven-year-old Swami Sivananda, who has organised the conference, stressed the unity of all religions and said that the underlying differences were in 'non-essential' and ritualistic aspects.

Sri Ramaswamy Aiyar said: "It is our function to emphasize unity in variety. The world is not made to a single pattern, and variety is as important as unity. Those who would like to have only dull uniformity are doing as great a disservice to religions as those who emphasize meaningless differences. The spirit that has animated the Indian races through centuries has been the common quest for the Ultimate. Our roads may diverge, but our goal is the same. Today when the world is gripped by fear, if India stands for anything she stands for liberation from fear. That is the contribution which India can make to world peace."

Messages wishing the conference success were received from the Vice-President Dr. Radhakrishnan, Union Ministers, Governors, Rajpramukha, Mr. B.G. Kher, Indian High Commissioner in London, Mr. Chester Bowles, General Cariappa, and several overseas organisations.

Those participating in the conference included Maj. Gen. Yadunath Singh (who played a leading part in the Indian Army's operations in Kashmir and is now Chief of the Military Mission in Nepal); Maj. Gen. A.N. Sharma, retired head of the Army's Medical Service; sannyasins and many others. Just before the conference began the *Guru Granth Sahib* was taken out in a procession which was headed by an elephant and accompanied by a brass band.

At the conference Swami Sivananda recited verses from the *Upanishads* and sang a chant in English honouring the prophets and the seers of all religions, including Jesus Christ, Krishna, Buddha, Mohammed and Confucius.

Swami Sivananda denied that religion was the opiate of the masses, and said: "It is not a disease, born of fear, but it is our breath. It shows the way to peace, brotherhood and Self-realisation."

Swami Sivananda improvised verses, exhorting the audience to be good, to give up smoking, to raise their voice against social evils and to work hard in the service of their nations.

The Parliament, which sat morning and evening and far into the night, was addressed by the representatives of all the main religions of the





The Guru Granth Sahib is taken in procession

world. Swamiji himself was the first to reach the platform and the last to leave it, in spite of the fact that after a serious illness (lumbago) which had compelled him to remain in bed for over two months, he was moving out of his kutir for the first time. On the third night he conducted the session till everyone who wanted to speak had been given a chance: it was past 2 a.m. when he retired, only to be ready before 5 a.m. to meet Sri Ananthasayanam Ayyangar (later Speaker of the Indian Parliament) before his departure for Delhi. The condition of his body never interfered with the strength of his mind and the spirit of his service.

The following were among those who took part in the Parliament: Dr. M.H. Syed, retired Professor of the Allahabad University; Dr. B.L. Atreya, Head of the Department of Philosophy in the Benares Hindu University; Rev. St. John Catchpool of the Quaker Movement; Sri Swami Nirmalii, a great vedantic leader; Sri N.C. Chatterjee, President of the Hindu Mahasabha; Sri Swami Atmananda of the Yogoda Satsang, Calcutta; Sardar Bahadur Balwant Singh, Puri; Sri Kumaraswami of the Nav Kalyan Mutt, Dharwar; Sri Vyasji Maharaj; Sri H.J. Hablutzel of Switzerland; the Brahmakumaris of Mt. Abu; Sri Jayadayal Goenka of the Gita Press; Maharishi Shuddhananda Bharatiar; Dewan Bahadur Sri K.S. Ramaswami Sastriar; Dr. Thomas Ransch; General Sharma; Sri Samimi of Iran; Sri Ananthasayanam Ayyangar; J.E. Dr. Soedarsano, Indonesian Ambassador in India: Mahamandaleshwar Sri Chaitanya Mahamandaleshwar Ashram: Kailash Gangeswaranandaji of Delhi; Sri Swami Purushotthamanandaji of Vasishta Guha and Sri Sivananda-Vijayalakshmi of Madurai.

A magnificent volume containing numerous papers contributed by the leaders of the various religions who could not attend the parliament was published in commemoration of this World Parliament of Religions; it contains authoritative articles of learned persons, each a master of the topic dealt with.

The World Parliament of Religions was the crowning feature of Swamiji's ceaseless efforts to promote understanding and goodwill among the followers of all religions of the world, so that their combined moral force could be harnessed to bring about a world-wide spiritual revival — the need of the hour.

Platinum Jubilee

The 70th Birthday of Swamiji was a decided landmark in his life. His spiritual influence had covered the entire globe; and within his own life-time he saw the great mission of his life bear fruit and thousands all

over the world marching Godward. Hardly 32 years after he entered Rishikesh as a mendicant, with nothing but a cloth and a water-pot to call his own, he was taken in procession along the roads of Rishikesh with all honour and reverence. At the ashram itself, which had grown during these years from a 'cow-shed' into a township, the devout disciples had erected a temple where, in his own life-time, Swamiji was worshipped. The Platinum Jubilee witnessed this glory.

On the 7th September a grand procession, the grandest in the annals of the history of Rishikesh — grander than even the procession that was arranged on the day that Swamiji left Rishikesh on the epochal All-India Tour — had been organised by Sri Swami Paramananda (who had a natural flair for doing big things in a big way!) A motorcade with buses carrying devotees, sankirtanists and songsters; batches of devout disciples of Swamiji — some singing the maha mantra, some dancing in joy, some reciting the veda mantras; a small divine army of ardent followers of Swamiji, who had come to the ashram to take part in the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations; also a band-party and an acrobat — it was a mile-long series of arresting features.

The entire township of Rishikesh wore a festive appearance. There were flags and festoons everywhere and arches saying 'Long Live Sivananda' had been put up at a hundred places along the route for the first time in the history of the town. The procession went round the whole town so that everyone could have the blessing of Swamiji's darshan.

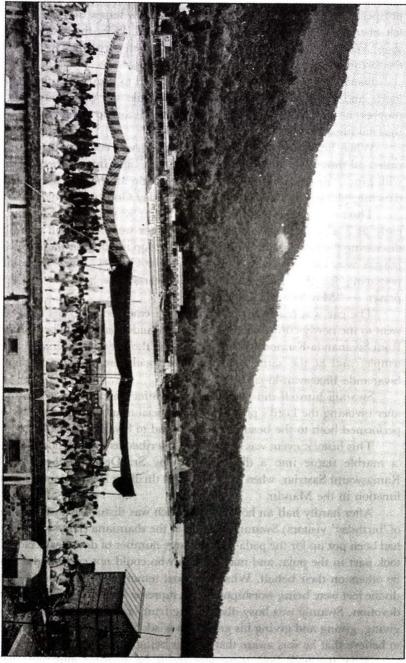
While passing through the main bazaar of Rishikesh, suddenly the procession came to a halt; several ladies who were walking along just ahead of Swamiji's car (decorated like a moving throne) had, even as they were singing the names of the Lord, begun to dance! Highly educated modern ladies, who belonged to the upper strata of Indian society, were singing the Lord's names and dancing along the road. They had not the slightest feeling that it was a public thoroughfare; to them it was Swamiji's divine presence. They gazed at his radiant countenance and lost themselves in ecstatic joy.

There were several shops in the town at which Swamiji's car was stopped and the proprietors offered devout worship to him. The Divine Life Society owed them large sums of money for provisions, etc. which it had purchased from them. As they garlanded him, worshipped his divine feet with flowers and waved camphor before him, the thought did not occur to them that the Society, of which he was the head, owed them money. They knew that though business had to be carried on and money accepted in return for goods supplied, what was really conducive to their



Swamiji garlanded on his birthday.





prosperity were his blessings and his grace. How happy and blessed they felt when Swamiji turned to them and enquired: "Oh, this is Sevaramji's shop? Which is Ayaramji's shop?" etc., and then turned his full gaze on the fortunate owners.

Everywhere fruits and sweets were offered to him, sanctified by his touch and distributed to devotees. Even while the procession was in progress he gave to those who sang and danced, and to several others who were taking an active part in the procession.

When he returned to the ashram, as he was entering his kutir he called all those who were accompanying him and invited them to dine with him. "You must all be very tired, walking all the way, singing and dancing; please forgive us for the trouble. May God bless you!" he said.

The next day (the 8th) Sivananda Nagar was astir with activity as early as 3 a.m., though most of the devotees were awake till midnight discussing the procession. Individual and group meditation was done and prayers were offered; many took bath in the Ganges; others were busy preparing for the celebrations. In all hearts was but one universal prayer — "May Swamiji live long!"

The car was ready at 6 a.m. Swamiji emerged from his kutir and went to the newly-constructed Sivananda Mandir(temple). Then Srimati Rani Sivananda-Kumudini Devi performed the opening ceremony of the temple, and at the same time the entire gathering shouted "Satguru Sivananda Bhagavan-ki-jai".

Swamiji himself did the pranaprathishtha (installation of a murthi after invoking the Lord's presence with special mantras). Then arati was performed both to the beautiful murthi and to Swamiji himself.

This historic event was beautifully described as the transformation of 'a marble statue into a divine being' by Sri Dewan Bahadur K.S. Ramaswami Sastriar, when he delivered a thrilling lecture soon after the function in the Mandir.

After hardly half an hour's rest (which was disturbed by the arrival of 'birthday' visitors) Swamiji went up to the shamiana (large tent) which had been put up for the pada-puja. A large number of devotees personally took part in the puja; and many others who could not come had it done by others on their behalf. What was most remarkable was that while his divine feet were being worshipped with supreme faith, intense feeling and devotion, Swamiji was busy distributing fruits and sweets to devotees—giving, giving and giving his grace, his wisdom, his love. It was difficult to believe that he was aware that he was being worshipped.

After the pada-puja there was music by visiting musicians from

Delhi, Dehra Dun, etc. Sri Sadhu Murugadas wanted Swamiji to go over to the musician's dais; and it was past 12 noon. A senior inmate of the ashram peeped in, feeling that it was time to wind up the satsang, but Swamiji went on singing his English philosophical song, adding: "Oh Swamiji! I am not afraid of you! You cannot stop the satsang now!" in a humorous vein.



Finally Swamiji went to his kutir at 1 p.m. Surprisingly enough he was the first to reach the shamiana to commence the afternoon session. (The surprise was only because of Swamiji's poor health: otherwise, he had always been the first to come and the last to leave any satsang.) It was a few minutes before 3 p.m. Even the ashram-workers, who were well acquainted with Swamiji's extraordinary traits, were taken by surprise. Swamiji himself had the dais put up, carpets spread and the whole place prepared for the satsang. (It was towards the close of this session that Srimati Sivananda-Zepporah of Australia formally presented Swamiji with a platinum wrist watch, studded with diamonds, to signify the Platinum Jubilee celebrations.)

The night satsang went on till after 4 a.m. on the morning of the 9th. People who could not keep awake left earlier; people who could not resist sleep, slept wherever they were; but Swamiji and a few devoted disciples who surrounded him had not had a wink of sleep. Musician after musician, sankirtanist after sankirtanist, sang the Lord's names and glories; Sri Sivananda-Vani of the All India Radio staged a drama; Sri Sudarshan Sarin conducted a variety entertainment programme by small children from her kindergarten school; while Sri Balam of New Delhi sang bhajans ecstatically. After 3 a.m. Swamiji remarked: "It is brahmamuhurtha now; so, we should all sing the Lord's names more vigorously." The satsang came to a glorious conclusion at 4.30 a.m.

At 7 a.m. when Swamiji came out of his kutir to attend the morning satsang no one could find on his radiant countenance a trace of tiredness, or a sign of the great strain that his physical being had been put to.

Sivananda Literature Festival

The following was a common sight at the ashram. It often went unnoticed, and much less understood, but it was unique:

A gentleman stepped in and was greeted by Swamiji with the warmth that melted the coat of reserve, suspicion and scepticism that he may have been clad in. Swamiji evinced interest in his achievements, ideas and ideals. The gentleman was pleased. What little reserve was left was easily washed away with sweetmeats and coffee. Almost half an hour passed. The renowned yogi of the Himalayas, reputed for his great wisdom, had not offered a word of advice or admonition — but the gentleman was not disappointed. He was preparing to leave, after meeting a 'lovable' personality. Swamiji quietly slipped a few books into his hands. The taste of the sweetmeats and coffee had gone, but the sweetness and the majesty of the face lingered. Later, memory tempted him to thumb through a book. A word, a line jumped out of the book. His eyes were glued to a paragraph. He was won, in spite of himself.

Such was the miracle worked by this ceaseless free gift of books, freely bestowed on all by Swamiji. So fond was he of this 'free department' that he never even enquired if copies were made available to the sales section. The reason was sound — the aspirant who asked for a book was obviously on the right path; if it was not available, he would derive inspiration from some other book. But that book might have served a

better purpose if it was given to someone who did not ask for it, perhaps did not even want it (and accepted it out of courtesy thinking — "How can I refuse it when this loving, good man offers it free?").



Swamiji's books are not just printed paper. They are the manifestations of God's grace, of God Himself. They are full of shakti. People have used them for innumerable purposes besides the acquisition of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment. Some have used them as a talisman to ward off evil; some have used them as the silent voice of God — when they have a doubt or difficulty they open a page and God speaks to them through a paragraph or a sentence on that page. Some have used the books as a good friend, a perfect companion, to keep away grief, gloom

and depression; while others keep the books for the sake of the inspiring pictures of Swamiji that they carry. If the language is alien to them, Swamiji himself is all the more near. To one and all, Swamiji's books are Truth made manifest, even as the Vedas, the Guru Granth Sahib, the Bible and the Koran are.

This was the idea underlying the Sivananda Literature Festival, which was celebrated on the Guru Purnima day — 20th July, 1958. The manifest Truth — Sivananda Literature — was looked upon not as just printed books, but as God manifest, ready and eager to bless, to guide and to enlighten.

THE MISSION SPREADS

Western Disciples

From within the four walls of his small kutir on the bank of the Ganges, Swamiji's influence spread throughout the world. He understood the problems of people living in countries he had never seen and guided them along the spiritual path.

Swamiji recognised that through the English language he could reach the maximum number of people throughout the world. He thought, talked, wrote and sang in English. (Not only Westerners benefited from this, but also modern Indian youth who had lost touch with their culture and religion in their desire to emulate Western civilisation. On reading Swamiji's books they were reawakened to their spiritual heritage.) The rational questioning minds of both Westerners and western-oriented Indians were won over by Swamiji, who adjusted his approach to the exact level of every person he met — he was a child with children, an adult with adults, an orthodox brahmin with Hindu pundits, a polished Westerner with Westerners.

Lucid, practical, uplifting and powerful, his books had a strong appeal to Westerners. His teachings on the different paths of yoga were enthusiastically received by them, and the way was opened for them to correspond on any problem they had with their spiritual practices and their lives. No letter to Swamiji went unanswered, and all felt an intimate connection with him through his wonderful letters. All who wrote to him were inspired and touched by his wisdom and his eagerness to befriend and guide them. He took as much care of his foreign disciples as he did of his Indian disciples and devotees.



The first European contact was from Latvia, where a society dedicated to teaching yoga in its pure form came into contact with Swamiji's writings in the 1930's. The society was so thrilled to find a master who put the principles of yoga in simple language understandable to all, that it soon began to function almost as a branch of the Divine Life Society. One of the leaders of this movement was Harry Dikman, who kept up a regular correspondence with Swamiji.

Swamiji's books were translated into Latvian, and from Latvia they spread to Estonia, where a branch of the Divine Life Society was also formed.

Swamiji's articles were then translated into Danish by Louis Brinkfort, and they appeared in the periodicals of Copenhagen. Lectures were given by Brinkfort in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and demonstrations and classes in hatha yoga began.

Dr. Heinz Baumblett of Belgium became inspired by Swamiji's teachings. He talked to many groups, where he also read out portions of Swamiji's books, concluding with prayers, kirtan and om chanting, (as suggested by Swamiji).

A Bulgarian clergyman followed Swamiji's teachings, keeping up a regular correspondence with him, and translating many of his articles for free distribution. With his friend Boris Sacharow he put Swamiji's precepts of selfless service into action as he helped the poor and the sick.

Swamiji's influence spread to England, Mexico, Kenya and other places on the African sub-continent. Branches of the Divine Life Society were formed in Mombasa, Nakaru, El Dovet, Teheran, Egypt, Rangoon, Shanghai and Bahrein.

Then came World War II.

Although living far away from the scene of the war, Swamiji wrote to his European disciples as if he was with them every moment. His whole heart was in his words. In a letter addressed to Dr. O.C. Pfaus of Germany he wrote:

The weakness and cruelties which the Europe of today is accused of, have been the lot of all nations at all times throughout history. These are not going to be cured by any number of revolutions or organizations of the few. No charter, no declaration, no constitution can bring about overnight a perfect world of harmony, peace and plenty. World salvation depends upon individual salvation; world perfection is achieved through individual perfection.

A generation of Christs, Buddhas and Vivekanandas alone can

materialise the dream world of perfection. And this kind of a perfect world by supermen is possible; and the agonising cruelties of the present-day are the great darkness before the dawn. It is a necessary schooling through which generations must pass in order to realise the futility of their endeavours, the hollowness of their achievements, the finiteness of their gains and the sorrowness of their joys.

The all-merciful Lord is manifesting only His extreme kindness in whipping us through such gruesome periods of history. If we are made to weep, it is because our animalism can melt away the easier and the earlier only through such a painful operation.

Never despair. Despair, when it sneaks into a heart, is a warning that the light of faith has blown out. In faith, patience and religious industry, and through steady practice, eliminate all weaknesses and passions from your heart.

Most disciples in Europe and other areas were unable to send letters to Swamiji during those troubled years, but as soon as war ended communications reopened, and with joy they wrote to Swamiji and expressed their delight in being able to contact him again.

Before the war many Europeans visited Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, and after the war many Americans came. Many others wrote, inviting Swamiji to tour America as part of his proposed World Tour. However, the tour was cancelled due to Swamiji's poor health, and at this time he wrote: "People from all parts of the globe are coming here and receiving spiritual guidance. Through correspondence also I give guidance... It is enough if the divine message reaches all parts of the world. There is no need for my stirring from this place. My England is here; my Germany is here."

At another time he explained: "It is a disadvantage to be always touring. You can awaken a few people by lecturing. You can thrill an audience. But unless you can immediately give them permanent inspiration in the form of books, they will soon forget all about the lecture in the din and bustle of their daily worldly life. If I had been always touring I would not have been able to write these books. It is in the interest of the service of the Lord's children that I have secluded myself here. To produce spiritual literature such seclusion is absolutely necessary."

Various devotees from other parts of the world requested Swamiji to send his disciples out of the ashram to help them in promoting Swamiji's teachings and set up spiritual centres.

First was Swami Satchidananda, who was invited to Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka). After being there for 13 years he was invited to the United States of America and other parts of the world also. Through these centres he promoted Swami Sivananda's books and teachings.

The next to follow was Swami Vishnudevananda, who visited Hong-kong, Australia, U.S.A. and Canada, where he finally settled. The Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres which he established in Canada and many other countries promote Swamiji's teachings.

In 1959 Swami Chidananda was invited to visit America, Europe etc. and from then he has regularly visited many countries throughout the western world as well as Malaysia, Singapore, Hongkong, Japan, etc. (After the mahasamadhi of Swami Sivananda, Swami Chidananda was elected President of the Divine Life Society, and since then has continued his great work of visiting Divine Life Society branches and other centres throughout the world. Swami Krishnananda (as General Secretary) and Swami Madhavananda (as Vice President) have stayed at the ashram in Rishikesh and are continuing Swamiji's glorious mission.

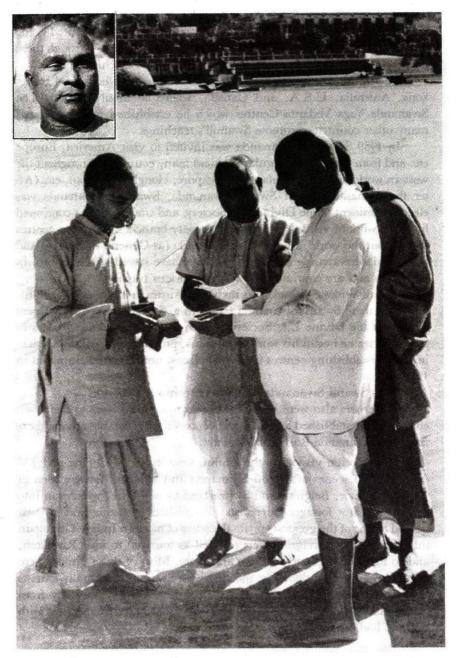
Swami Venkatesananda was invited to Australia and Ceylon in 1961, and from there Swami Sivananda sent him to South Africa at the urgent request of the Divine Life Society Branch in Durban. After 3 years in South Africa he began his world-wide tours, propagating Swamiji's teachings and establishing centres in several places, until his mahasamadhi in 1982.

Thus Swami Sivananda's teachings spread world-wide.

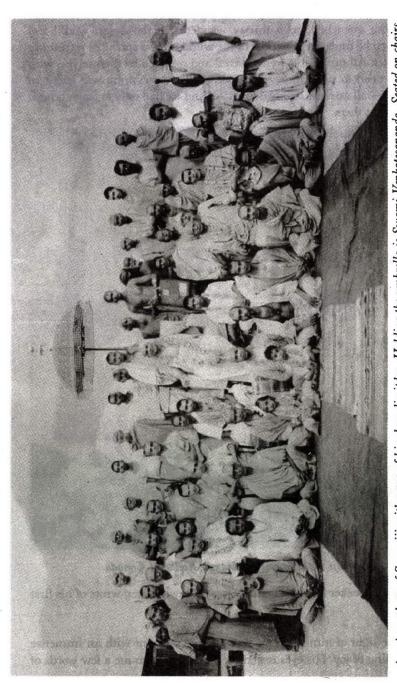
Westerners also were initiated into sannyas, went back to their own country and established ashrams and centres there. Notable among these is Swami Sivananda-Radha, of Canada.

Some foreign visitors to the ashram went armed with cine and TV cameras, and scenes of Swami Sivananda and ashram life were seen in Canada, France, Belgium and Switzerland by audiences which ran into millions. Many foreign journalists also visited Swamiji, and he was quoted as one of the greatest spiritual leaders of modern India. This again influenced many foreign seekers (as well as tourists) to visit Rishikesh, and so his teachings spread more and more. Most of these visitors were deeply impressed by their first meeting with Swamiji, and many tourists were transformed into disciples at their first meeting. One lady from Israel, Assia Malkiely, wrote of the impact that her first meeting with Swamiji had on her:

Sitting there opposite him, looking at him while he was doing a



Swamiji with Swamis Paramananda (see insert also) and Venkatesananda



are Swamis Madhavananda (2nd from left), Krishnananda (3rd from left), Chidananda (2nd from right), Vishnudevananda (far right), while standing next to Swami Vishnudevananda is Swami Paramananda. Swami Nadabrahmananda is seated in A unique photo of Swamiji with some of his close disciples. Holding the umbrella is Swami Venkatesananda. Seated on chairs front of Swami Sivananda. dozen and more types of work at a time, I felt my spiritual thirst being quenched, as a thirsty wanderer in the desert would feel when he finds, in the midst of the wilderness, a spring of refreshing water. All my doubts were cleared and resolved by themselves, with no need to use words, as I realized that everything was latent in us — all answers to our doubts — and we had only to learn how to unfold them.



Swamiji with Swami Sivananda-Radha of Canada

Another seeker from Holland, Albert Bonwincester, wrote of his first meeting:

The sight of him filled me at the same moment with an immense feeling of joy. His eyes rested on me, he spoke to me a few words of friendship and welcome. They were not words of long-awaited big truths, but nothing could have made me happier. They were a few simple words, full of divine love and compassion. It was a radiating atmosphere, so full of peace, that I hurried to my quarters to find in myself a joy I had never known, a light I had never seen. What no books could convince me of, the mere presence of Swami Siyananda did.

Dr. Maryse Choisy, editor of *Psyche*, went to the ashram expecting to meet an Indian who had no understanding of Western science and culture. She wrote:

I sensed at once in him the presence of that real wisdom for which we all crave, whatever our material birthplace may be... Swami Sivananda knows all the things you can learn in a Western university and many more which you cannot. The most stubborn materialist must feel that aura, that magnetism, that serenity, that holiness which float about Swami Sivanandaji. What struck me as most admirable and new about him is the way he puts the divine in every moment of life... Whether it be psychology, medicine, philosophy or religion, Swami Sivananda has something to teach us.

Most of the Westerners who came to Swami Sivananda came from Christian backgrounds. Many had given up their faith and were seeking alternate spiritual values. On coming into contact with Swamiji, however, many found that their understanding of Christianity was deepened and enriched, and they became inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ on a completely new level. Dr. R.T. Werther of Perth, a Jew who had been involved with Christianity, visited Rishikesh at Christmas time. About this he wrote:

There and only there I found the peace which comes when all your innner conflicts are resolved. I saw that this so-called 'man of another nationality and religion' was exactly in conformity with the teachings of our master, Jesus Christ. Yes, I found there real Christianity, which I missed to find in our Western world.

Erich Pierschel wrote in his book Indien, Geheimnis und Mysterium:

Christ is as much honoured here (Sivananda Ashram) as is Krishna... At Christmas, we, the Europeans, were requested — on behalf of Sivananda — to stage the event of Christ's birth. Just imagine. In the country of Mother Durga and the gods Vishnu and Brahma, we are asked to glorify Christianity. This is a tolerance which seems unbelievable.



Dr R. T. Werther reads from the Bible at the Christmas satsang.

A Christian professor wrote that he saw in Swamiji's books the interpretations of many an obscure passage in the Old and New testaments.

Branches

Swamiji infused spirit into his disciples so that they actually felt his invisible presence in their midst, making them competent to organise Divine Life Centres abroad. In just over a year several branches of the Divine Life Society had been started all over the world. This was brought about by two highly interesting methods. Firstly, an address coming into his hands meant that a packet of pamphlets and leaflets went to that person. Secondly, the articles he regularly contributed to several journals all over India, and outside, too, inspired everyone who came into contact with them — from the sannyasin-disciple who copied them, to the printer and proof-reader, the editor of the journals and the thousands of readers. After reading the articles they started to practise sadhana; when they found that they derived benefit, they wanted to contact the author. They wrote, and their names were caught in Swamiji's Address Register.

During the course of a conversation, Swamiji remarked:

This is my address book in which I note down the address of all those who come into the Divine Life fold — editors of journals, professors, headmasters, European and American sadhaks, etc. Whenever a new book is published, it is this register that helps me to send it to various persons who will be benefited by it. These twenty-five years I have gone on maintaining this register. Writing addresses of all sadhakas is to me a greater form of sadhana than formal meditation. This is a form of meditation in which not only we, but others also, are benefited. There are seekers all over the world who correspond with me regularly. To them a book or a pamphlet or a leaflet sent occasionally will act as a tonic... It is this register that gives such spiritual food to thousands.

If their initial enthusiasm cooled down, Swamiji would not leave them. They got his leaflets, pamphlets and magazines. This worked wonders and brought about a simultaneous spiritual awakening throughout the world, without Swamiji having to go anywhere. Many of his first disciples were inspired to join the mission after they had received these. Individuals were encouraged by Swamiji to do their bit in this spiritual awakening among their circle of friends and relatives, and that became a Divine Life Branch. Many of these branches grew into

dynamic institutions in course of time, under the divine leadership of Swamiji himself. They conducted sadhana-classes and conferences, celebrated all auspicious occasions and printed and distributed leaflets and pamphlets containing Swamiji's teachings.

(One such early Branch of the Society — the Quilla Gujjar Singh Branch at Lahore — published *The Divine Life* magazine during its first year, before the Sivananda Publication League at Rishikesh took over all publication work.)

On the 29th September, 1949, on the receipt of the news of the inauguration of a branch of the Divine Life Society at Singapore, Swamiji gave the following directions:

There should be at least three people, able and energetic, to attend to the work of stirring up branches into intense activity. Regular despatches should go to the branches every month. Letters from branches should be answered promptly. Messages should be sent for the opening ceremony, anniversary, etc. Someone should keep track of the progress and inspire the branch office-bearers every now and then to greater peaks of activity.

The institution has grown more rapidly than anyone could have anticipated. However many efficient workers come, we still find that we are short of workers, and that everyone who works here is overworked.

The most important thing is to keep constant track of the work that is going on and the persons that we come into contact with. My address-book helps me in that. I have put the address-book under lock and key nowadays. It is the most precious thing for me. It is the channel through which I can serve the world. I have asked Puroshottamanandaji to take particular care of the two trunks of manuscripts in my kutir. Even if there is a flood and all other things in my kutir are destroyed, I will not allow these two trunks to be destroyed. Put me in a forest a hundred miles away from here; but give me my address-book and those two trunks, I shall begin all over again and build up the institution from there!

In the address-book I have addresses of every sort of person — ministers, maharajahs, maths and ashrams, professors, philosophers and scientists. As soon as I get an address my work begins. I may get the address in any manner: through letters I receive from so many people, from the corners of journals that I get, from books that we get for review or as gifts for the library. I

am always watchful for addresses, and the moment I get an address I at once enter it in the register. Then the man is registered. At once I write a letter, send a packet of leaflets, some books also, have the address entered in the Magazine Register, send the *The Divine Life*, and enter the name in the Prasad List, etc. Previously, the moment I got an address I would start a regular campaign with letters. On one day the man will receive three letters! And for the first two weeks there will be a regular flow of Divine Life into his house. One day he will receive the magazine, the next day a letter, the third day a packet of leaflets, another day prasad, and then books, and so on.

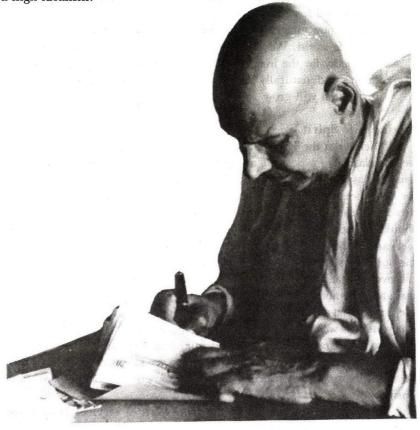
That is how today I have established contact with many people all over the world. We should not have the motive of acquiring their sympathy for the institution, but should genuinely desire to serve them, and naturally they will serve the cause also. Thus, the institution will grow.

Divine Life Spirit

"Neither at the Headquarters nor at the branch centres should there be any clamour for position and power." Swamiji made no mistake about this vital aspect in the conduct of the institution. In fact, the original rules for branches suggested that though selfless workers should eagerly come forward to shoulder the responsibility and the running of the branch, they should all adopt the uniform pseudonyms of Guru-das and Hari-das (servant of the guru and servant of the Lord). At the headquarters, too, the spirit of selflessness was insisted upon by Swamiji. The moment he discovered that a particular worker's head was swelling, he would silently train another and transfer the work to him; the first man would thus learn the lesson that for Swamiji's mission no one was indispensable, though everyone was welcome to contribute his share. This method did spiritual good to the aspirant concerned by guarding him against the greatest enemy of divine life - egoism (which first manifests as pride and then develops its manifold branches of selfishness, greed, lust for power and position, etc).

Swamiji set an example in the true spirit of service. During the years 1946 and 1947 visitors watched with the greatest amazement this sage serving food to guests and inmates in the dining hall. He would bend low before each one and say "Roti, Bhagavan," and "Dhal Bhagavan," and so on. If it was summer, he would take a big fan in his hands and fan the diners.

Once the Divine Life Society had to send a money order to a school student, towards his scholarship. The secretary was expected to sign and send it. When the money order form was presented to Swamiji for his perusal, he quietly signed as the secretary of the Society. "I have signed it myself: let the money order go today itself," he said. He did not mind if you called him President or Secretary or even by a lesser designation; the service had to be rendered efficiently and smoothly, without any delay or red-tape. It is not by assuming titles and power that work need be extracted, but by love and personal example, and by instilling in the workers a high idealism.



Swamiji once said:

"Do not overwork. Make other people work. You should know how to extract work from others through kindness, love and sympathy. It is not easy. It demands reduction of egoism. You should put yourself on a lower level and praise them, sing their songs and hymns, respect them. You should adapt, adjust and accommodate. You must become one with them."

If a secretary or someone in authority in the ashram was a little lax in inner discipline, Swamiji's behaviour towards him would be enough to turn his head and make him feel that, but for him, the mission would collapse. Swamiji would take the little man's advice and faithfully abide by it.

Though the Divine Life Society itself is so broad and all inclusive, and though its aims and objects cover all aspects of the life of man, yet Swamiji founded a number of other institutions with specific purposes. In retrospect one cannot but be struck with wonder at the sagacity and far-sightedness with which he had established them all. It is clear that he was able to foresee the need long before it arose. He 'saw' crises long before they beset the path of man, and not only the problems but their solutions, too. He proclaimed them and forewarned humanity.

All-World Religions' Federation

The All-World Religions' Federation was established on the 28th December, 1945. Little did anyone imagine that even in these enlightened times there would arise riots in the name of religion. To the inner eye of the sage the future was as distinct as the present and he was able to envisage the calamity that was to overtake India soon after.

During the inaugural session of the Federation, Swamiji gave a clearcut idea of the eternal foundation on which he had built this noble edifice of the Federation:

In the basic essentials of their belief all religions are in perfect accord and agreement. The little differences that are seen are merely with regard to superficial non-essentials. Therefore pay no undue heed to these, but grasp the fundamentals; then there will be no room for conflicts, misunderstanding and quarrels. Harmony and brotherhood will prevail. Humanity will become, feel and live as one. You cannot try to establish this sweet concord and unity through social association, esoteric brotherhood, political party or enthusiastic secular programmes and slogans, for all these touch but the outer fringe of the human being. Contact the fundamental part of him, his essential spiritual nature.

All-World Sadhus Federation

Equally significant was the establishment of the All-World Sadhus' Federation. When Swamiji had pointed out this untapped, limitless source of power which could be fruitfully harnessed for the good of humanity, the national leaders of India and the other nations, too, were awakened to it. The main difference between his approach to the question and the politicians' approach to it was, of course, that in all that he did Swamiji always aimed at the good of all concerned. However noble the argument, he did not favour any one group of people exploiting another. He had found that the men of renunciation could best be made to take active part in nation-building activities, with advantage not only to the nation, but to themselves. Though he had always exalted service of the sick and the poor as service dearest to the Lord, he emphasised that ultimately the sadhu's field is spiritual awakening and leading the masses on the path of divine life. The sadhu is welcome to take part in social service in order to set an example to others; but he should not neglect his primary duty — which is the spiritual awakening of man. Even the social service is to be rendered only in this spirit. That was the aim with which the Sadhus' Federation was established. The details of this inaugural meeting are given in the following report which appeared in the April, 1947, issue of The Divine Life:

The All-World Sadhus' Federation has been founded by Sri Swami Sivanandaji on Wednesday, 19th February, 1947, the most auspicious day of Maha Sivaratri. The inaugural gathering was informal because the idea of establishing the organisation occurred to Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj a few days before Sivaratri and, as is usual with him, he did not want to postpone even a moment longer than he could help, and there was, therefore, no time to announce it or invite a big gathering of delegates, etc. Thus Sri Swamiji and a few others met in the premises of the Yoga Sadhana Kutir at Sivananda Ashram, at 4.30 p.m. on 19th February, 1947. After pranava (OM) chanting, the usual kirtans were repeated. A brief talk was given by Sri Swami Sivanandaji wherein he stressed the necessity of such a union amongst all the different religious orders all over the globe. He pointed out how the revival of true religion, spiritual education, real uplifting work and spreading of unity and harmony between man and man can be done more effectively by such whole-timed men who have dedicated their lives to this pursuit of world service, and continued, "The average man whose time is taken up entirely by bread-winning labours hardly finds breathing time for his own spiritual practices. The masses, therefore, look to the renunciates, sannyasins and the holy men of the world to guide and help them in all matters, and to show them the way out of this maze of earthly existence.

"Till now, however, this class has been regarded as an isolated group, as it were, outside the pale of secular society. This has been the result of their segregating themselves for the purpose of spiritual sadhana and of self-development. Such segregation has tended to make them lose touch with the rest of the world. The time has now come when they should revive contact with the toiling masses in the towns and cities for effectively knowing and understanding the problems and difficulties of the householder and the common folk in the street, in order to effectively do the work of spiritual ministry and thus justify their position as the guides and spiritual advisors of humanity. It is only a co-ordination and unification of all the units of the sadhu fraternity in the different countries of the world that will make them a powerful factor to play this role."

The Federation was then declared formally established, with its headquarters at Rishikesh. Its aims and objects are to bring about unification of all holy men, monks, sannyasins, fakirs and bhikshus all over the world, and the world-wide revival of spirituality through their selfless efforts. It will do all that is necessary to work out the above objects and also prepare such workers for the task ahead. The session concluded with peace prayer.

Almost a decade later this idea was taken up and the Bharat Sadhu Samaj was formed. Similarly, in the West too, several evangelists have conducted 'Crusades' for winning souls for God, and in retrospect one cannot but be wonderstruck at the insight and foresight of Swami Sivananda.

On the 9th April, 1956, when he inaugurated the first session of the Bharat Sadhu Samaj convention, Swamiji said:

Bharat Sadhu Samaj will work for the spiritual uplift of Bharat (India) and the whole world. Sadhus and sannyasins are potent powers, eternal storehouses of energy — that they have become through renunciation, through dispassion and meditation. When

they utilise their energy they can easily effect the moral and spiritual regeneration of not only India, but the whole world at large. Their instructions will penetrate the hearts of the people. India is already a spiritual country, and this will have its impact on the West, and they, too, will be uplifted. There must also be some sannyasins who can devote themselves to whole-time meditation.

Dynamic Spiritual Awakening

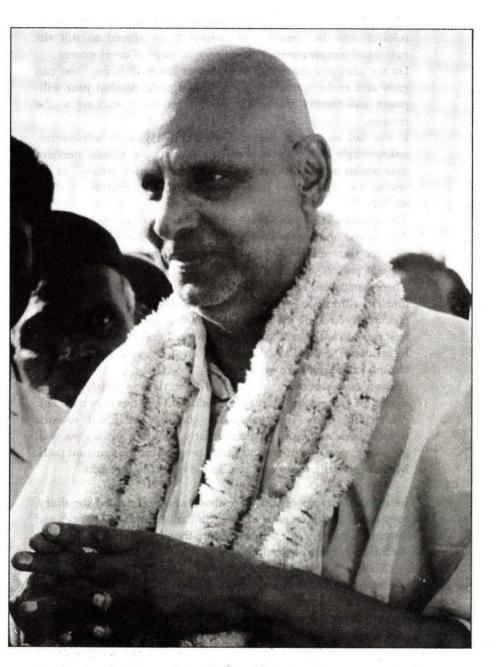
The ashram, the inmates, the Divine Life Society and the other institutions were only the instruments. The mission was the spiritual awakening of mankind at large. It was not enough if the handful of aspirants that had gathered around him at the ashram elevated themselves spiritually. Swamiji never let them forget for one moment that their own salvation lay in the spiritual awakening of humanity.

In serving the mission itself, the salvation of those who were chosen and blessed to do so was ensured. They were doing the Lord's own work for His sake: and Swamiji was never tired of reminding them of this great fact. Thus he brought about the good of all at the same time. It is difficult to imagine what a tremendous task it was. Even the scientist first perfects his instruments before using them, but here was a super-scientist who would dare to manufacture extremely delicate commodities with machinery and instruments that were themselves in the 'experimental stage'. The strain this method imposed upon him would have broken the spirit of any other person or even yogi on earth.

The 'Correspondence Section' was one of the unique features of Swamiji's mission. No other saint or yogi has had such heavy mail. He did not wait to be asked, but invited correspondence — whereas many in his position would have thought it a botheration when aspirants could very well clear their doubts by reading his books. Moreover, Swamiji's books never raise any doubts or conflicts in the mind of the reader, but the path is well and clearly laid. There exist thousands all over the world who consider themselves Swamiji's disciples, who follow his teachings contained in his books and who have made tremendous spiritual progress, and yet have never written to him.

Another unique feature was his insistence that aspirants should make resolves and keep a *Spiritual Diary. He said:

^{*}See Appendix.



Tranquil, peaceful, happy

Make a few resolves for practice during the New Year. Any of the resolves may be crossed out, added to or altered to suit the individual temperament, convenience or stage of development.

Do not abruptly change your nature or mode of living. You can grow and evolve quickly in the spiritual path, develop your will-power and control the mind and the senses by sticking to the resolves.

If you fail in any of the resolves through lack of self-control, unknowingly or by force of circumstances, you should perform some malas of japa or give up one meal to remind yourself of the resolve and to impress upon the mind the importance of these resolves.

The resolves form should be prepared in duplicate and one copy duly signed and sent to your guru so that you may not be tempted to relax your efforts or ignore or break any resolves under the slightest pretext or lame excuse.

There is no sword sharper than this diary to kill the big thief hiding himself within you — your mind. The diary is superior to your parents. By keeping the diary you can then and there correct your mistakes, do more sadhana (yoga-practice) and evolve rapidly.

In maintaining the diary do not utter any falsehood: you are maintaining it for your own good.

Enough of the troubles you had all these days in satisfying your senses. Be sincere and start doing sadhana from this very moment. A spiritual diary is a whip for goading the mind towards righteousness and God. If you regularly maintain a diary you will get solace, peace of mind and quick progress in the spiritual path. Maintain a daily diary and realise the marvellous results.

The regular correspondents were those who maintained the diary, sent a copy every month, expressed their difficulties and experiences and sought Swamiji's guidance. Then there were those who followed the path shown by Swamiji in his books and who sought his blessings to overcome obstacles. Then again there were those who supported the mission with their love offerings: often they would get an unsolicited letter from Swamiji. This was an interesting feature in Swamiji's method of work. He called this 'creative correspondence'. Even a casual visitor to the ashram, when he returned home, would find a letter from Swamiji awaiting him. This started a series of letters. People received free books and pamphlets from Swamiji. They acknowledged 'with thanks'. One would consider the

transaction as complete: but to Swamiji it had only commenced! The last letter would always be *from* him. When people knew that he was a saint whom they could easily approach and who took delight in helping them out of their difficulties, they told their friends, and thus the Correspondence Section grew.

Sadhana Weeks

Another method adopted by Swamiji was the holding of 'Sadhana Weeks'. During the Easter and Christmas holidays he gathered at the ashram earnest seekers after God, who came from all parts of the country to undergo intensive training in the various spiritual practices. An elaborate programme of sadhana — including all items like japa, meditation, likhit japa (mantra writing), yoga asanas, observance of mauna, selfless service, etc. — was drawn up. Lectures by Swamiji himself and other mahatmas and senior aspirants were arranged to give those who attended the Sadhana Week a good theoretical background to sustain the spirit created by the week-long training. They returned from Rishikesh infinitely richer for coming.



With the Sadhana Week participants

The following 'Instructions to Members of the Divine Life Sadhana Week' were published in *The Divine Life* for the guidance of those who would attend the First Sadhana Week at the ashram, held during the Christmas week in 1939. It gives an idea of Swamiji's own pattern of the ideal life, and also the ways in which he expected seekers to train themselves:

- 1. Diet is entirely left to the convenience, habit, nature and constitution of members. There is no hard and fast rule.
- 2. The following is the prescribed diet for the Sadhana Week:

On the 26th — Bread, rice, dhal, vegetable without salt and milk without sugar.

On the 27th — Milk alone. No rice, dhal or fruits.

On the 28th — Rice, bread, dhal, vegetable, milk without sugar. On the 31st — Sweets will be given with food.

On all other days ordinary meals with rice, bread, dhal and vegetable, without any restriction.

- 3. Morning 9 a.m. and night 9 p.m. milk will be given. On the 27th, instead of meals at 12 noon, milk will be given.
- 4. Food prescribed as above will be supplied by the Ananda Kutir kitchen. The members can make their own arrangements if they so desire and if the prescribed diet does not suit them.
- 5. Fasting is not strictly enforced, but it is left to the choice of the members.
- 6. Whatever method the members follow, the Secretary should be informed on the 24th and the particulars should be given in the Spiritual Diary.
- 7. There will be no necessity for the members to speak. At the prescribed time food and milk can be had from the kitchen.
- 8. Tea must be avoided completely on all days. Those who are habituated can take tea on the 25th and 31st December.
- 9. Members should try to sit in padma or siddha asana. In the morning hours during prayers, Pratasmarana stotras of Sri Sankaracharya, Siva stotra and Guru stotra will be repeated in chorus. Members are requested to follow the prayers in harmony, in a melodious voice.
- 10. In morning japa, prayers, meditation, likhit japa (mantra writing) and svadhyaya (study), the members can sit in one asana. When they change the posture in the middle they should not unnecessarily twist the body, hands and legs, and thereby distract

others. Frequent changes of asana should not be made.

- 11. In all common functions members are requested not to look hither and thither. Posture must be steady and mind concentrated. Others should not be disturbed by unnecessary sound, hard breathing, shaking the hands and legs, sneezing, hiccough and other sounds. All members should try their level best to maintain a calm and quiet atmosphere throughout the morning hours and during manasik (mental) japa, concentration, tratak and meditation.
- 12. Mental japa is done without moving the lips, without a mala. This is compulsory in all common functions. When japa is done individually in separate places, mental, whispered or loud recitation can be done, with or without a mala.
- 13. During morning hours if anyone feels sleepy or drowsy he can continue the mental japa or prayers by standing for 10 minutes. While standing or sitting no sound should be produced that will draw the attention of others.
- 14. For japa the mantra of ishta devata or guru mantra should be recited. For likhit japa, mental japa etc., one mantra should be maintained. Mantra should not be changed.
- 15. Likhit japa should be written clearly in ink in a separate notebook. Mantras can be written in Sanskrit, English or mother tongue.
- 16. Lord Krishna's picture will be kept in the centre of the meditation hall. A ghee lamp also will be burning throughout the morning period. Bhaktas can do tratak on the picture. Others can do tratak on the ghee lamp or OM.
- 17. Akhanda kirtan is done by repeating the maha mantra. This must be chanted in a uniform manner. Frequent changes of tune must not be made. There should be no break in the middle. Every member will lead for half an hour and all others will follow in chorus.
- 18. The members will join together on the 31st December and arrange for the cooking of food and service of all the sadhus, mahatmas and the poor. At the end they will take prasad. The members themselves will contribute their mite to the kitchen for this item. According to finance, the required number of sadhus and mahatmas will be invited.
- 19. All members should write an essay on the practical side of sadhana on the 28th, and try to speak at the evening satsang on the

29th. A copy of the essay can be handed over to the Secretary, Divine Life Society, for publication. The name and address of the members should be clearly written on the first page.

20. Spiritual Diary forms will be supplied to members. This is for guidance only. Detailed particulars should be given in a separate notebook as regards japa, daily routine, concentration and meditation, one page for each item with daily entries. At the end of the notebook they should write the obstacles and difficulties they find in sadhana, and their experiences. After a perusal of the Diary, further instructions will be given by Sri Swami Sivanandaji by post. The Spiritual Diary and mantra notebooks should be handed over to Sri Swami Sivanandaji before the 1st January.

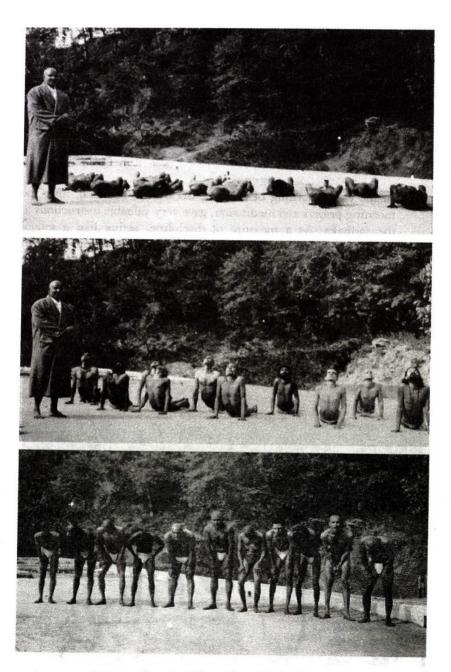
Members will be able to carry on the daily sadhana, without any distraction or inconvenience, with the following things: — (1) A vessel for drinking water, (2) hurricane lantern and torch, (3) watch, (4) a seat of deer-skin or kusa grass, (5) a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, (6) rudraksha mala or tulasi mala, and (7) ordinary bedding with one blanket.

Further instructions given in the March 1947 issue of *The Divine Life* are highly inspiring:

When you come to attend the Sadhana Week, come with the proper spiritual attitude. Do not come to attend the Sadhana Week as though for a week-end holiday to spend your vacation. Unlike picnics or pleasure trips, this is a different and more serious occasion. You need not be over-serious or gloomy; but the holiday mood is out of place at this time. It will spoil the solemn atmosphere and also prevent your reaping the maximum spiritual benefit out of it.

You dress yourself in your uniform while on official duty. You put on special clothing on special occasions or during ceremonial events: For Sadhana Week do not come dressed as though for a marriage party or an official gathering. Have a simple dress that will be conducive to keep yourself in a religious frame of mind.

At least for that one week, all such things like special attention to toilet, elaborate combing and brushing of hair, trimming moustache, applying hair oil, etc., should be given up by men, and ladies should stop scent, face-powdering, nail-polishing, etc. You should have the sole consciousness that you are a sadhaka and have



Senior swamis of the ashram demonstrate asanas

come specially to do some solid sadhana.

The instructions also warned that those who (1) take a resolve that they would not smoke, chew tobacco, etc., during the Week, and who break their own resolves, and (2) who are not punctual in attending the classes, would have to pay a fine of one rupee more. Aspirants who knew the soft heart of Swamiji thought that they could ignore this and that Swamiji would ignore it. They were mistaken. The Sadhana Week Report mentions:

In the early morning of the 31st, Sri Swami Maharaj, after the morning prayers and meditation, gave very valuable instructions to the sadhaks. As a measure of discipline, acting like a school teacher, he collected fines from those sadhaks who were slack in attending classes and who were not observing the rules laid down for them. The fines so collected were distributed to the poor that afternoon. Those who did not possess money were asked to hold the right ear with the left hand and the left ear with the right hand, and made to bend several times, elbows touching the ground. This was a new experience to many sadhaks who thought that as usual Sri Swamiji Maharaj would allow their mistakes to pass unnoticed.



Evening meal by the Ganges at the Summer Training Course

The Sadhana Weeks were always spiritual training camps. There were theoretical lectures, no doubt; but they were only regarded as aids to spiritual practice. Practice was all-important. In the brahmamuhurta there was group meditation. No one was exempt.

During the Sadhana Weeks Swamiji would insist on some of the inmates of the ashram going round and waking up the visitors and taking them to the Bhajan Hall for the meditation class. If a visitor was absent Swamiji questioned the inmates of the ashram and not the visitor himself: the inmate had neglected his duty. Swamiji even gave us elaborate instructions on the 'art' of waking up a sleeping person: "Do not shout. It will give an undesirable shock to the nervous system. At first, utter a mild OM. Wait. If he does not wake up, raise the tone a bit. Do not be impatient. When he responds, wait for a few more moments. See that he actually gets up. Sometimes, after answering your summons, he might once again go to sleep. Do not think this a waste of your time: it is wonderful service of the Lord, greater than meditation. You are helping the spiritual evolution of a kindred soul."



Visitors' asana class

Meditation would be followed by the yoga asana class.

In all these it was Swamiji's own presence and active participation that provided the greatest inspiration. He always mingled with the sadhaks as one of them. There would then be study of scriptures; the Gita. Upanishads, Ramayana, Bhagavatam, etc., would be devoutly studied. Japa, likhit japa, etc., were systematically taught: there would be a brief introduction, followed by the actual sadhana, in practice. The competitive spirit was encouraged and utilised by Swamiji to provide the incentive for greater spiritual effort. There would be a yoga asana competition and a mantra writing competition. During the Gita Jayanti celebrations there was also the Gita recitation competition. On occasions an essay writing competition was also introduced. Prizes were awarded: one or two sadhaks were awarded the first prize and the second prize, but Swamiji could not really make such distinctions and, therefore, he would call out the names of all the other competitors too and award them all first prizes. Children got some articles of use: e.g., pens, pencils, etc., and elders got Swamiji's books with his autographed blessings.

During Sadhana Weeks there would invariably be a regular karma yoga class. The following is an account of such a class held during September, 1945:

Not content with giving instructions, advice and hints, on three different occasions during the month Sri Swamiji conducted a unique programme in the shape of a regular karma yoga class. At the sound of a bell the entire party of visitors and inmates turned out before the main ashram premises. First to be on the spot was Sri Swamiji himself, ready for the task — his dhoti girded up and a towel tied as a turban around his head. Then followed the neverto-be-forgotten sight, to the astonishment of the passing pilgrims and the local residents. With shovel and broom Swamiji began the cleaning up of the roadside and the Ganges bank. One or two visitors of high birth and status hesitated just for a moment, but the sight of Sri Swamiji clearing the gutter with his right hand up to the elbow in the drain, made them forget everything; and they, too, fell to work like ordinary labourers. Clearing with his own hands the dung and the refuse from the road, Swamiji showed how the force of direct personal example was by far the best persuasion to inspire others in the field of selfless service. While he had the basket of dripping wet refuse actually upon his head, his inner feeling flashed out for a moment when he gravely said: "Remember Sarvam khalvidam Brahma (All indeed is God). There is absolutely

nothing bad or dirty or unclean in this world. Everything is in your mind. Feel that everything is the Lord. Then the real spirit, vision and attitude of the true karma yogi will come to you. Never regard any work as low or menial. All actions are worship of the all-pervading Supreme Spirit. Action will not bind you. It will give you Self-realisation. Repeat:

Kayena vacha manasendriyair va buddhyatmana va prakriter svabhavat

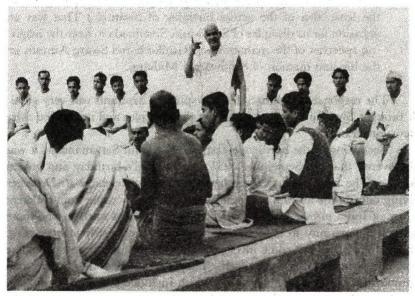
karomi yad yat sakalam parasmai narayanayeti samarpayami.

I offer to the Lord everything that I do with my body, mind and soul."

These karma yoga classes actually made everyone an entirely changed being, filling them with the spirit of service and bestowing a new humility to their natures.

In addition to the Sadhana Week, Swamiji organised the Summer Training Courses for the special benefit of the teachers and students of schools and colleges. This was of course open to others, too.

The syllabus covered all the important items of individual sadhana, the methods for carrying on collective sadhana and systematic spiritual propaganda on broad non-sectarian Divine Life lines.



Advice from Swamiji at the Summer Training Course

Birthdays

The society celebrated the birthdays of all the prophets of all religions of the world. Of particular importance to the members, as well as the disciples and devotees of Swamiji, however, has been the Sivananda Jayanthi (birthday). The origin of these celebrations is interesting. In the year 1936 Swamiji had gone on tour. The idea of celebrating his birthday occured to the handful of disciples then living at Ananda Kutir, but they did not know the date of Swamiji's birth. They had only learnt from Swamiji himself the year, the month and the constellation under which he was born. Among Swamiji's disciples was an able astrologer — Swami Satyanandaji of Ceylon. They requested him to fix the exact date and, according to an astrological method, he drew up a horoscope. In the meantime, however, Paramanandaji had an idea. "Siva's birthday we will celebrate on Sivaratri day," he said, and the birthday in 1935 was actually celebrated on the Maha-Sivaratri day.

This is how Paramanandaji described the first 'birthday celebrations' at Ananda Kutir:

Then there were only six or seven inmates at Ananda Kutir. Once Swamiji had been to Sitapur to conduct sankirtan and hold sadhana classes there. I invited some mahatmas of Rishikesh to join us in a satsang. (We called it Swamiji's Birthday, but I had not the least idea of the actual birthday of Swamiji.) That was an occasion for us disciples of Sri Swami Sivananda to hear the inspiring speeches of the mahatmas of Rishikesh and Swarg Ashram on the life and mission of Sri Swamiji Maharaj.

The response of the disciples and spiritual aspirants was very good. It brought Swamiji nearer the heart of the disciples and intensified their devotion to him.

According to the horoscope cast by Sri Swami Satyanandaji, it was discovered that 8th September 1937 was Swamiji's birthday and golden jubilee. The authorities of the ashram decided to celebrate it. Devotees living outside the ashram welcomed the idea. Many came from different parts of India to take part in the celebrations. It was to them one more golden opportunity to have Swamiji's darshan and listen to his words. Those who could not come invoked Swamiji's blessings from their home towns by celebrating there itself. They all adopted the programme announced by the headquarters — which included common meditation in the early morning (brahmamuhurta), dawn procession round the

roads singing the Lord's name, feeding of sadhus and the poor, printing and distribution of leaflets containing Swamiji's message and instructions, and a satsang or public meeting in which seekers after Truth had the benefit of the spiritual teachings of scholars, yogis and saints. At the conclusion there was invariably mass prayer for the welfare of the entire mankind. This actually proved to be another God-sent opportunity of enabling the gospel of divine life to spread further.



Guard of honour on Swamiji's birthday

Since then, birthdays of Swamiji have been celebrated with greater and greater enthusiasm at the ashram and all over the world. After Swamiji's All-India Tour in 1950 particularly, these celebrations assumed the magnitude of a great religious festival. In the big cities of India dynamic centres of the Divine Life Society organise the birthday celebrations on a scale which is in no way less than the headquarters celebrations themselves. They have been able to make up for the physical absence of Swamiji in those centres by invoking his spiritual presence, by sending a powerful beam of their combined thought-current to the lotus feet of Swamiji, and by listening to his glorious life and mission expounded by scholars and saints — often those who were closely acquainted with Swamiji and his message.

Whenever he took up a work which was aimed at bringing good to people, Swamiji was so intensely dynamic that he would think about it and make others think about it day and night. Better and more effective ways constantly suggested themselves to him. For a considerable time that particular section of the ashram would take on a festive appearance and be ever-humming with activity, till that which he wanted was done perfectly well in a methodical and routine manner. His own disciples who have imbibed this spirit manifested it even in the celebration of his birthday. The news item published in *The Divine Life* magazine of January, 1949, tells the rest of the story:

Birthday Celebration: Devotees of Sri Swami Sivanandaji all over the world have been celebrating his birthday on the 8th September every year. It has been the fervent prayer of some of the foremost disciples of Sri Swamiji that the commemoration should be more frequent, at least once a month, to enable them to carry within their hearts the continuous feast of the birth of Siva-anandam (auspiciousness and bliss). We are glad to report that this took effect from the 8th October, and since then the 8th of every month has been a great day of kirtan, prayer and spiritual sadhana at the ashram.

If it meant someone doing one mala of japa more than usual, a few moments of meditation or a pious act of selfless service, Swamiji himself would encourage the celebration of his birthday — or anyone else's, for that matter — every day.

His Voice Immortalised

In October 1940 Swamiji visited Calcutta for the recording of his voice on gramophone discs. Sri Swami Kaivalyanandaji (a sannyasin-

disciple of Swamiji who had organised the Publication League at Calcutta for the printing and publication of several of Swamiji's works) had taken a keen interest in arranging with the Hindustan Musical Products to record the inspiring speeches and kirtans of Swamiji on gramophone discs. Swamiji utilised this opportunity of paying a visit to the biggest city in India, to create a spiritual stir there. He addressed several meetings in the city and returned to the ashram on the 13th November, 1940.

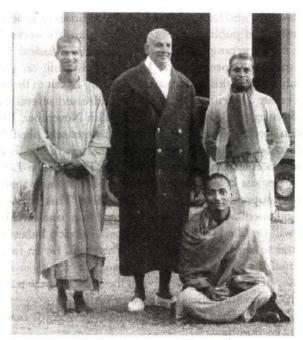
Thirteen records were made. Swamiji immensely liked the idea of the dissemination of his message and the names of the Lord in this manner. In a notification published later in *The Divine Life* he said: "Hear the songs just before going to bed and in the early morning, and you will enjoy supreme peace and highest bliss. This is both study of scriptures and meditation. You will be free from undesirable dreams. Your mind will be filled with purity. You will develop balance of mind, inner spiritual strength and strong will. There will be an inner urge to lead a spiritual life. This is constant satsang for you even in the busy world of noise, strife and turmoil. Live in the spirit of these teachings and attain moksha or emancipation in this very birth."

Swamiji had another set of ten gramophone records made in 1944 when he went to Bombay.

Swamiji's All-India Tour opened up yet another avenue for the immortalisation of his voice — magnetic tape recording. The first time his lecture was caught by the magnetic recording device was while Swamiji was at Dharmapuram early in October, 1950. His discourse at the public reception there was recorded and relayed on the very next day, to Swamiji's own surprise. Once again, during the same tour while he was at Bombay, his discourse on the *Bhagavad Gita* was tape-recorded. Paramanandaji and Saradanandaji were charmed: it was such a thrill to be able to capture Swamiji's voice as he spoke, and to listen to it immediately! As soon as Swamiji returned to the ashram in November, 1950, both these swamis went over to Bombay and purchased a tape-recorder for the ashram.

Such was Swamiji's enthusiastic response to this novelty that he literally dedicated himself to its best use. The recorder arrived when he was convalescing at Dehra Dun hospital, but nothing could prevent him from spending hours at a stretch letting Saradanandaji record all his speeches and songs. (The doctors who were attending upon this extraordinary 'patient' were amazed at the energy Swamiji could muster at will.)

The following is one of the speeches he recorded:



Outside Dehra Dun Hospital

O man! Do not be discouraged when sorrows, difficulties and tribulations manifest in the daily battle of life. Thou art the master of thy destiny. Thou art divine. Live up to it, feel it, realise it. Draw up spiritual strength and courage from within. Learn the ways to tap the source. Dive deep within. Sink down. Plunge into the sacred waters of immortality. You will be refreshed, renovated and vivified.

Understand the laws of the universe. Move tactfully in this world. Learn the secrets of nature. Learn the best ways to control the mind. Conquer the mind. Conquest of the mind is really conquest of nature and the world.

Do not murmur or grumble when troubles and sorrows descend upon you. Difficulties strengthen your will, augment your power of endurance and turn your mind towards God. Face them with a smile. In your weakness lies your real strength. Conquer the difficulties one by one. This is the beginning of a new spiritual life, a life of expansion, glory and divine splendour. Expand, grow. Build up all positive virtues — fortitude, patience and courage. Start a new life.

Have a new angle of vision. Arm yourself with discrimination, cheerfulness, discernment, alacrity and undaunted spirit. A brilliant future is awaiting you. Let the past be buried. You can work miracles. Do not give up hope. You can neutralise the effect of evil influences and the antagonistic dark forces that may come against you. You can nullify destiny — many have done so. Assert, recognise, realise thou art the immortal Self or Atman. Claim thy birthright now.

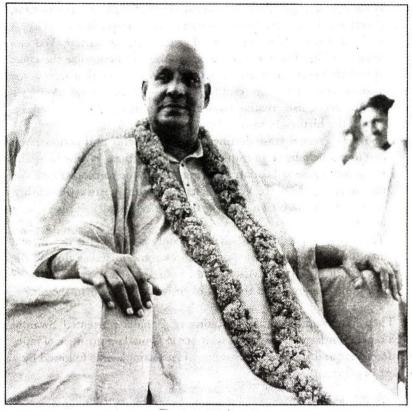
You have created your destiny through thoughts and actions. You can undo them by right thinking and right action. Wrong thinking is the root cause of human suffering. "I am the immortal Self" — this is right thinking. Work in terms of unity, work unselfishly, work with Atma-bhava (feeling that the self is all). This is right action.

There is no such thing as sin. Sin is only a mistake; it is a mental creation. The baby soul must commit some mistakes during the process of evolution. Mistakes are your best teachers. Think, "I am pure Atman," and the idea of sin will be blown in the air.

Then Sri Swami Sivananda-Radha of Canada presented Swamiji with a tape-recorder and also took with her to Canada a number of tape-recorded songs and speeches of Swamiji. Her example was followed by a number of others.



A recording session



Majestic Sivananda

The proprietor of a firm of publishers in Germany had an inspiring speech by Swamiji on meditation recorded on the magnetic tape and transferred it onto a long-playing record for wide dissemination.

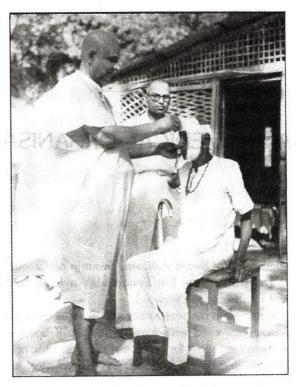
In 1959 Sri Swami Sivananda-Hridayananda and Sri Swami Shantananda compiled several dialogues from the songs and writings of Swamiji and tape-recorded them. The following 'one act plays' in which Swamiji himself took the main part were recorded by them: (1) Goal of Life, (2) A Morning with Sivananda, (3) Practice of Bhakti Yoga, (4) Vedanta for Modern Man, (5) Sivananda, the Darling of Children, (6) Bhagavad Gita, (7) Siva Gita (autobiography), (8) Ananda Gita (in the form of questions and answers), (9) Sangita Ramayana and (10) Essence of Bhagavatam (songs).

SIVANANDA MEDICAL ORGANISATION

Even while he was in Swarg Ashram, Swamiji had acquired a great reputation as 'Dr. Swami' or 'Dr. Sivananda'; and sadhus and poor villagers flocked to him for medical aid.

When he went over to the present site after leaving Swarg Ashram his portable dispensary travelled with him. A couple of hours of his busy morning were always set apart for service of the sick. One or other of the earliest disciples assisted him, and thus received technical and spiritual training in the art of healing.





The Annual Report of the Society for the year 1942 mentions the following facts about the work done by the Sivananda Charitable Dispensary:

The Dispensary has been rendering yeoman service to the public of the locality, so much so that it has earned a good name in the district. Medicines are given to all, free of charge and at all times of the day and night. Special treatment is given to deserving persons, with occasional monetary assistance for recouping their health.

Medicines are mostly supplied to the dispensary by two principal doctors and donors, namely Sri Rai Saheb Dr. Het Ram Aggarwala, M.D., Amritsar, and Sri Dr. Parsram C. Punjabi, M.B.B.S., Hyderabad (Sind), while monthly and occasional donations are also received from Capt. T.N. Srivastava of Meerut and other well-wishers. During the year, 1,932 patients attended the dispensary for medicine and medical aid.

Another noteworthy way in which Swamiji trained his immediate disciples and those who sought his guidance, was to infuse into them his own spirit of service. According to him, service should go out to the needy and not wait for them to come. From time to time, at the instance of Swamiji, small parties of selfless workers went with medicines, milk and other foodstuffs to the neighbouring ashrams and locality to serve the mahatmas suffering from malaria and cholera.

Sivananda Hospital

Dr. K.C. Roy, M.B.B.S., was one of the active organisers of Swamiji's programme at Chidambaram (South India) during Swamiji's All-India Tour in 1950. He joined the ashram dispensary soon after the completion of the Tour. During the period of over six years that he spent at the ashram as the medical officer in charge of the dispensary, it grew into a hospital. In the meantime, Major-General A.N. Sharma, I.M.S. retired from the Army and joined the Sivananda Medical Organisation.

Thanks to the inspiring leadership of Swamiji and the enthusiasm with which these wonderful disciples responded to him, the hospital grew into an organisation with all the latest equipment calculated to bring the greatest possible relief to the poor people of the neighbourhood, and the mahatmas of Rishikesh. An X-ray plant, a microscope, diathermy and ultra-violet ray apparatus and surgical appliances were added to the hospital, one after the other. Beds were provided for indoor patients, and ultimately the whole building had to be remodelled, bringing happiness, relief and comfort to the patients. The treatment, the diet and the expert attention they may have got elsewhere too, but not the holy healing vibrations of Swamiji's goodwill and prayers.

The Ratan Devi X-ray Clinic was formally opened by Swamiji on the 4th November, 1953, when the X-ray unit was installed in a separate room on the premises of the Sivananda General Hospital.

The installation of the diathermy apparatus had a very interesting background. In 1952 when Swamiji had an acute attack of lumbago, some of the disciples went to a military hospital to find out if their diathermy apparatus could be used by Swamiji. They kindly agreed, at the rate of Rs. 10 per sitting. Later it was declared unnecessary, and so the idea was dropped. When the pain returned during the next season, Swamiji had a diathermy apparatus acquired for the use of the Sivananda General Hospital. "It will be of great use to the poor villagers and the sannyasins of the neighbourhood. They can't afford to pay. Let us bring the treatment to them, free of any charge," said Swamiji. So the costly apparatus

was available free to the poor. The instrument was formally installed in the hospital on the 26th February 1954.

The Clinical Laboratory was formally opened on the 21st March, 1954, with a microscope presented to the hospital by Dr. Sivananda-Ramjas, eye surgeon of Rewari.

Sivananda Eye Hospital

Swamiji's mission had been very dear to Capt. Srivastava — particularly the medical aid part of it. He bequeathed Rs.20,000 for the construction of an eye hospital at Sivananda Nagar. The story of its establishment is told in the following poem written by Swamiji:

Mystery of Mysteries

Capt. Srivastava Who has never met me even Willed Rs. 20,000 for the Eye Hospital. This is a great mystery. Dr. Chellamma, the eye surgeon Who came for a brief stay Renounced family, wealth and lucrative practice And became the Hospital's Eye Surgeon. This is indeed a great mystery. Instruments arrived from Switzerland and Bombay. This is another mystery. Another great soul obtained cement To help us construct the hospital. This is yet another mystery. What is the mystery of these mysteries? It is faith in God. If you have faith in God, Help comes in time, The impossible becomes possible. This is the mystery of mysteries.

The newly constructed Eye Hospital building was formally opened on the 24th December, 1957, and had its own surgical ward, operation theatre and up-to-date equipment.

All this specialised knowledge and treatment and all these rare facilities were placed at the disposal of the poor people and the mahatmas,

absolutely free, and no one — whatever be his social status, however casual be his acquaintance with Swamiji and however brief his visit to the ashram — could escape the opportunity of serving some poor patient or sadhu. The infectious zeal with which Swamiji 'compelled' him or her to 'do a little bit of selfless service' would make them work with a cheerfulness of heart which he or she had perhaps not experienced before. That was the genesis of the various Medical Relief Camps.

Eye Camps

Early in 1950 a young and enthusiastic eye surgeon stayed for a few days in the Ashram and Swamiji found in him an excellent person for receiving his spirit of service. The first Eye Relief Camp was the result. Swamiji found that there was a great scope for selfless service here; and it became a regular annual feature afterwards, till the Eye Hospital was established and the camps were considered superfluous. Dr. Sivananda-Rewari and Capt. C.S.K. Iyer conducted another Camp. Afterwards Dr. Sivananda-Adhvaryoo of Virnagar took up the eye camp work at the ashram. The unique feature in his case was that he brought with him all the medicines and surgical equipment necessary, all the attendants and nurses, and even the money needed to conduct the camp. He conducted it in the way Swamiji recommended. Morning and evening prayers prepared the surgeon and the nurses, and generated the proper spirit in them. A prayerful mood during the operation enabled the Lord's healing grace and power to flow through the dexterous hands of the surgeon. Words of cheer and encouragement, the frequent utterance of the Lord's name, and assurances given to the patient - By the grace of God, the operation is successful and you will be all right in a day - all brought about miraculous healing.



Swamiji with patients and staff at the end of the Eye Camp

A report in The Divine Life says:

The Eighth Eye Camp (the second one in the current year) was held under the auspices of the Sivananda Charitable Hospital, at Sivananda Nagar, during the third and fourth weeks of November. Whilst the eye department of the hospital is already looking after the cases it is especially intended to treat - including by means of surgery - a special camp was opened by Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj on the 20th November, on the arrival of Dr. B.G. Adhvaryoo, M.B., B.S., D.O., of Virnagar, Bombay, who has established for himself a remarkable reputation both as a highly efficient eye surgeon and also for his great humanitarian services in holding eye camps at various places to bring relief to poor patients. During the four days stay of Dr Adhvaryoo at the ashram about 210 patients availed themselves of his services, 31 of whom were treated surgically. This included removal of cataract, iridectomy, pterigium, etc. Though the camp was mainly intended to treat eye cases, patients suffering from general diseases were also given special medical advice and treatment. Five of these underwent surgery.

Dr. S.N. Sharma of Delhi conducted a Dental Camp also.

Whenever a lady doctor came to spend a holiday at the ashram Swamiji would announce a 'Women's Medical Relief Camp', to such an extent that the women of Rishikesh had the habit of enquiring about the probable date a lady doctor would visit the ashram. Dr. Devaki Kutty of Lucknow, Dr. Vasanta of Bombay, Dr. Lakshmi Mirchandani of Delhi, Dr. Amar Kaur of Dehra Dun, Dr. Saroj of Bombay and Dr. Padma Mudholkar of Nagpur took part in this wonderful service.

How Swamiji utilised the talents and services of a highly qualified doctor in order to achieve a double purpose is revealed in the following report of a 'Women's Relief Camp' published in *The Divine Life* of August, 1956. Though the doctor had come to Swamiji for the recharging of the inner spiritual battery after a strenuous period of work in her own hospital, Swamiji instructed her in the glory of selfless service, in the art of living entirely for others and in the divine life of self-sacrificing service of others without the least expectation of reward. He made her look at her own profession from a new angle. He imparted to her the wisdom that transforms work into yoga. On the other hand, of course, he brought expert knowledge, beyond the reach of most of the people in and around

Rishikesh, to relieve the suffering of the poor and the mahatmas. The report says:

The sixth relief camp for women's and children's diseases was held under the auspices of the Sivananda General Hospital, from 18th June to 20th July. Dr. Devaki Kutty, M.B., B.S., D.G.O., M.R.C.O.G., Reader at the Queen Mary's Women's Hospital, Lucknow, who is also visiting doctor to the ashram's hospital, was in charge of the Camp and was assisted by Dr. Saroj Shroff, M.B., B.S., and others, including the hospital staff. It may be recalled that every year a similar relief camp is held during the visit of Dr. Kutty — or any specialist in gynaecology and obstetrics — whereby a valuable opportunity is afforded to the women patients of Rishikesh and the neighbouring areas to avail themselves of the specialised treatment and medical guidance. The doctor in charge of the Camp treated about 400 patients, 65 per cent of which were gynaecological and 2 per cent obstetric cases, including seven surgical ones.



An operation in progress

A brief summary of the work turned out at the two hospitals (the Sivananda General Hospital and the Sivananda Eye Hospital) during the year September 1957 to August 1958 is a glowing tribute to the spirit of selfless service that Swamiji had been able to infuse into the noble band of disciples living at his lotus feet:

A total number of 16,768 patients (of which 11,086 were males and 5,682 were females) received treatment here in the year. Two medical relief camps for women and children and one each for eye and dental cases were also held. The General Hospital, together with the Eye Hospital, provides ten beds for in-patients, which are nearly always full.

Recognising the great service rendered by the hospitals, the State as well as the Central Government gave financial aid to them; and the Indian Red Cross Society also supplied some medicines, etc.

Health Education

'Prevention is better than cure' is the wise adage which Swamiji adopted as his own motto quite early in his medical career. Even as a budding doctor he would devote a lot of time and energy to the education of people in the art of healthy living, as well as in attending to their ailments. Throughout his life he always taught people how not to go to the doctor: i.e., how to enjoy good health. Two ways in which the Divine Life Society has sought to follow him are indicated in the following excerpts from *The Divine Life* of February, 1954:

As usual, during the pilgrimage season the hospital provided packets of essential medicines to all those who visited the ashram on their way to the holy shrines in the Himalayas, as well as rendering medical aid to the ailing, before and after their pilgrimage.

This has always helped the pilgrims, by dealing on the spot with minor ailments like cold, diarrhoea, constipation, fever, etc., to prevent worse illnesses.

Effective steps were taken, on a modest scale, to check the epidemic of malaria which is a regular menace to the local population during the four months of the monsoon. Prophylaxia to a considerable

extent was ensured by the systematic administration of Paludrine to the residents of the locality and the neighbourhood. They were also provided with anti-mosquito oil. Prompt treatment was employed in the effective cure of the disease. Consequently there has been some reduction in malaria cases treated at the hospital during the last year.

In 1954 the Society also organised mobile medical units to bring immediate relief to the pilgrims travelling to the holy shrines in the Himalayas. An announcement in the same journal outlines the idea in the following words:

The Sivananda Medical Organisation proposes this year to organise mobile medical aid units, each of which will be adequately equipped with essential medicines and comprising three or four selfless devotees. The first batch of volunteers will leave Rishikesh on the 1st of May. Thereafter the Organisation will endeavour to send a constant stream of volunteers similarly equipped... Every moving unit will halt for a day or two at each of the halting centres and will also attend to the medical needs of the local villagers. They will conduct satsang and sankirtan before and after their daily work.



First aid classes

While certainly the sick should be served and suffering relieved, even that is a secondary service when compared to the prevention of illness and promotion of good health. Towards the achievement of this object Swamiji published his valuable books on health. The first journal that he edited, *Ambrosia*, carried valuable lessons in the prevention of illness, and these articles have all been gathered and published by the Sivananda Publication League in the book *Home Physician*.

The place of thought-culture in the building up and maintenance of good health was recognised by Swamiji, and therefore he always insisted that the sick man should be encouraged to feel that there is nothing wrong with him. He set an example in this regard by his own conduct. Even when he was very ill, the first thing he would say when one enquired "How are you, Swamiji?" was a cheerful "Wonderful!" and then later on give a slight hint of his physical condition as though it mattered little. In 1954 when he was seriously ailing, an important inmate of the ashram went to Swamiji to enquire about his condition. As soon as he entered the room, Swamiji began: "Oh Swamiji, you must look after your health. Which do you like, sweet or salt biscuits? ... Shall I give you a tin of Chyavanaprash? ... Would you like to go to Mussoorie for a change?" etc., so that the great swami forgot the purpose for which he went there!

When great psychologists of the West visited the ashram, Swamiji enthusiastically arranged for them to lecture. The foremost among them were Dr. Maryse Choisy of Paris and Dr. Graham Howe of Harley Street, London, who visited the ashram and delivered a series of lectures in 1952 and 1953, respectively.

Swamiji wanted to equip every aspirant with a good knowledge of the essential principles of medical aid and service of the sick. This zeal took a concrete shape in 1949 when he organised a 'First Aid and Home Nursing' class, and had a series of lectures-cum-demonstrations given by Swami Chidanandaji. When Dr. K.C. Roy joined the hospital Swamiji asked him also to conduct a class on the same subject. Later, Major-General A.N. Sharma, during his annual pilgrimage to the ashram, conducted two training courses in First Aid and Home Nursing and awarded the St. John Ambulance Certificates to the successful candidates. Dr. Lila Vlachou of Greece, during her stay in the ashram, conducted a class in massage.

Universality of Outlook

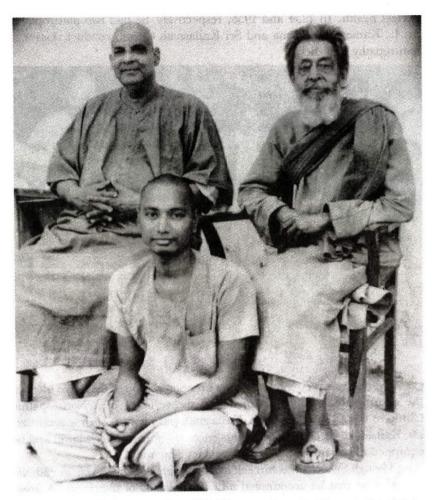
Swamiji always took every opportunity of educating his students and the public at large in the art of right living, with a view to ensuring perfect health. In 1954 and 1955, respectively, he had two naturopaths, Sri L. Kameswara Sarma and Sri Kailasnath Gupta, conduct classes in naturopathy and diet.



Swamiji was very enthusiastic in his appreciation of the noble ideas of the naturopaths, and even sanctioned the running of a Naturopathic Clinic in the ashram when Dr. Kailasnath put forward such a proposal. Dr. Kailasnath received tremendous encouragement from Swamiji and he equipped the clinic with all the necessary apparatus.

Though Swamiji was himself an allopathic doctor, he was so catholic in his views that he encouraged all other systems of treatment. A good homeopath, Dr. Brij Nanan Prasad, came within the sphere of his influence and was immediately prompted to open a Homeopathic Clinic at the ashram.

While declaring the clinic open, Swami Sivananda said that all systems of medicine were necessary to suit different types of constitution and temperament; that homoeopathy, too, was as necessary as allopathy, and that service of the sick was the chief ideal, whichever the means. Another homeopathic clinic, the Sivananda Charitable Dispensary, is also functioning, originally under the very able guidance of Sri Swami Achintyananda, assisted by Swami Venkatesananda, A.M.I.H., the then attending physician of the dispensary.



With Swamis Venkatesananda and Achintyananda at the Homeopathic Clinic

Swamiji also recognised the value of yoga asanas in the treatment of diseases and used to persuade Sri Swami Vishnudevananda to study this branch of the ancient art of health, and to apply it in cases where the doctors had given up hope.

Another important field of medical service that was very dear to Swamiji's heart was the service of unfortunate victims of leprosy. Here is what he said, when (on the 3rd May, 1949) Rev. Taylor of the American Leprosy Mission met him along with a U.P. Government official and requested Swamiji's assistance in the matter of leprosy relief in Rishikesh:

The government officials and also the State Health Minister, Dr. Gairola, have always sought the assistance of sannyasins for this work. Why? Because these helpless victims of their own prarabdha (fate) are neglected by all other sections of the community. A practising doctor would refuse to treat lepers, for his practice would cease, and with that his earning. People are afraid to go near lepers. Only a sannyasin who has renounced worldly life and who has no fear even of death, can boldly undertake such humanitarian services.

The ashram's hospital always had a good stock of medicines that would be specially required for the treatment of lepers. Every year Swamiji distributed blankets, clothing, etc., to them. To a few of them who had lost either their eyes or the use of limbs, Swamiji gave pocket money also.



At a leper colony near the ashram

Swamiji's inspiration moved one of his disciples — Sri Rani Sivananda-Kumudini Devi of Hyderabad — to organise the Sivananda Leprosy Rehabilitation Centre in Hyderabad which shelters, protects and educates several thousand lepers. It is really a satsang centre for the lepers, for they are taught to sing the Lord's names, and to listen to discourses of learned mahatmas. This is the threshold of liberation both for the doctors and other selfless workers who serve the lepers, as well as for the lepers themselves.

Sivananda Ayurvedic Pharmacy

The birth and growth of the Ayurvedic Pharmacy has an interesting story behind it. In 1945 Swamiji had obtained from a sadhu a recipe for an effective toothpowder. He had brought his knowledge and experience to bear on this, and requested an ayurvedacharya (an expert in India's indigenous system of medicine), who was till then serving as a teacher in the Sivananda Primary School, to prepare the tooth-powder. When this was done he had the tooth-powder distributed to the ashramites. The visitors, too, were naturally introduced to it: and when they expressed their appreciation of it Swamiji wanted them to have a regular supply from the ashram. How could this be done? Naturally by preparing this in good quantities. The ayurvedacharya, Sri Satchidananda Maithani, agreed. The Sivananda Ayurvedic Pharmacy was born on the 6th May, 1945.

The next two items that were added to the preparations of the pharmacy had also a similar origin — the Brahmi-amla Oil and the Chyavanaprash. Besides the proficiency and spirit of dedication of Sri Maithani, several other factors were now discovered. The ayurvedic medicines and tonics prepared by the immediate disciples of Swamiji with pure Himalayan herbs and the holy waters of the Ganges, in the pure atmosphere of the ashram, had certainly a better effect than others' preparations. Hence Swamiji relieved the ayurvedacharya of his duties at the school and appointed him to devote himself solely to the preparation of the three tonics most useful to all spiritual aspirants for the maintenance of good health. To these were added, by and by, other equally efficacious and useful medicines and tonics. As early as 1952 the pharmaceutical products gained the whole-hearted appreciation of the government, as is evident from the following note given by the Deputy Director of Medical and Health Services, U.P. Government:

I have great pleasure in certifying that I have visited the Sivananda Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Works, in the month of June, 1951, and previously also on one or two occasions. The medicines manufactured at this pharmaceutical works were found to be of very high purity and had been prepared according to the ancient ayurvedic system of medicine prevalent in India. Sri Swamiji has been doing a great service to humanity by making available very valuable drugs growing in this region of the Himalayas, at a remarkably low cost, to the people not only residing in India but also outside. Every one of the preparations is being manufactured with the best

of care and precautions regarding its efficiency, and there is hardly any possibility of any harm being done to anybody by the use of these medicines.

The Ayurvedic Section of the Health Directorate of the Government of U.P. also adopted Swamiji's book *Gharelu Davayiam* (Hindi translation of *Bazaar Drugs*) for use in all rural ayurvedic dispensaries that are conducted by the State Government.

The special merit of the Ayurvedic Pharmacy's preparations is described in the following note published in *The Divine Life* of April, 1946:

The products of the Ayurvedic Pharmacy Department are taken by the public with great eagerness. This department works with the pure intention of helping people of poor health and physique. More than the genuine materials used — which by themselves guarantee the benefits — every particle of the product is saturated with spiritual vibrations. The pharmaceutical experts sing kirtans and pray to the Lord at every stage of the process. Raw materials are selected with great care and processed in their correct proportion.

Ideals of a Selfless Worker

In the following anecdotes Swamiji reveals the supreme ideal that a selfless worker should always hold before himself:

"Did you take the temperature of Balammal in the evening?" questioned Swamiji as he was coming out of the Bhajan Hall after the night satsang. "I did not go there in the evening, Swamiji," replied the aspirant. At once Swamiji went to the patient's room, and he would not leave the place until every minute detail in connection with the patient's requirements had been attended to. Swamiji then said: "Put yourself in the patient's place. That is the best way to ensure attention to the minutest details. If you consider that you are the doctor, you would neglect some things. Even if you consider yourself a nurse, you would miss or forget some things. Think for a moment that you yourself are the patient. What would be the things you need? See that all those things are available to the patient. You must enter into the patient's spirit. That is real service. There must be a bed-pan. This is most important, especially in the case of aged patients, like this lady. There should be light, matches,

water in a bucket and a glass. All these things should be neatly arranged in the room so that the patient can reach out to them without much difficulty. You should pay particular attention to the arrangement of the bed. Even the slightest carelessness in this regard would deprive the patient of nature's most powerful remedy — sleep. Haphazard making of the bed won't do. What would be a mild discomfort to a healthy man would be an unbearable horror to a sick man — bear this in mind. You should not lose one opportunity of service. Then and then alone will the selfless service become part of you. Lord Dattatreya says in the very first sloka of the Avadhuta Gita that advaitic realisation is impossible for one unless there is God's grace. God's grace can be obtained through sincere untiring selfless service and devotion only. Service of the sick is the greatest form of selfless service which will at once cleanse the heart and invoke God's grace into it."

When a devotee from Bangalore was laid up by a sudden attack of shivering and fever due to a cold dip in the Ganges, Swamiji was at his door late at night to see if the proper medicine had been given, whether he had taken it and how he felt. Another visitor, confined indoors one day due to some indisposition, got a surprise when after the evening worship at the ashram temple the sacred flame of the arati was brought to him, where he sat inside his room. Swamiji missed nothing and had thoughtfully deputed a student to go with the arati lamp (and an extra piece of camphor) to the ailing guest.

Over and above all this, Swamiji regarded divine grace as the most important factor in the maintenance of good health, and emphasised the power of prayer at every turn. Even a sick animal lying on the roadside presented him with an opportunity to pray. He would stop then and there and repeat the maha mritunjaya mantra, and only then move on. At every Centre during the All-India Tour he spoke of the glory of the mantra and gave mass initiation into it. When he received information that someone was sick, he conducted maha mrityunjaya mantra japa during satsang.

Colonel Rikhye, the great and noble doctor who was supremely devoted to Swamiji and who attended on him when he was convalescing at Roorkee after typhoid in 1954, had a severe heart attack in 1959. He lay dying and asked for someone to be sent to Rishikesh to get Swamiji's blessings. While the messenger was on the way to Rishikesh the nurse attending the Colonel declared that he was dead. The wife went to the

bedside, weeping. Telegrams had gone out to the children and the doctors had been informed, too. Imagine the lady's surprise when just at 9.15 p.m. the Colonel 'woke up' and asked for a drink of water. The dead had come back to life! That was the exact period when, in response to the messenger's request, Swamiji was conducting prayers at the ashram. The Colonel was alright the whole of that night and the next day, till he got prasad and books from Swamiji. He applied the prasad on his forehead and placed the books reverently on his head. He passed away peacefully that night.

The Viswanath Mandir renders the following inestimable service every day: puja, archana and abhishekam are offered to the Lord enshrined in the temple, for the health and long life of devotees; and the sacred prasad is sent to them.

During the All-India Tour, Swamiji addressed the International Fellowship on Inter-Religious Co-operation. The following is an extract from his speech:

You want everything for yourself and then you wish to build up an International Fellowship. That you cannot do. You must see God in the man lying on the roadside. There are actions that can be offered as flowers to the Lord, that would be pleasing to Him. For instance, a European took a cholera patient on his own shoulders and got him admitted in the hospital.

Then, referring to such service rendered by Swami Chidananda (then General Secretary of the Divine Life Society), he said:

There was a dog near the ashram which was suffering from a terrible disease. It gave such a bad smell that you could not go near it. But Swami Chidanandaji dressed its sores carefully for weeks and months with his own hands. His heart is very soft. His writing and his lectures come from his very heart; they are powerful. You must bring out *Gita* and *Upanishads* from the heart, from a pure heart that melts at the suffering of others.

After describing how Chidanandaji served a leper similarly, Swamiji said:

Such actions you will have to do. They will purify your heart and give you inner strength. Every member of the Fellowship will become a spiritual dynamo.



Swami Chidananda

The Sivananda Medical Organisation functions wherever Swamiji's doctor-disciples live and serve. Major General A.N. Sharma, Director General of the Organisation, set an example. He organised a dispensary at Dadh in the Kangra Valley where he spent the summer months; Dr. Ramjas of Rewari treated his patients free on the 8th (Swamiji's birthday) of every month; Dr. Saroj Shroff of Bombay adopted Swamiji's motto of selfless service to the poor in running her clinic; to mention a few. Their number is legion: they silently worked a revolution in the field of medical service.

COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

Photographic Studio

The guru's portrait represents the highest spiritual ideal in the eyes of the seeker after Truth, just as to the patriot the national flag stands for his beloved motherland. Realising this the publishers of even the earliest of Swamiji's writings had asked for and obtained his photographs for publication in the books. They themselves used to pay the studio bills. When Swamiji was in Swarg Ashram he had to go to Hardwar frequently to have a photograph taken.

The publishers had their own specifications. They had to keep an eye on the market, and satisfy the prospective reader. The South Indian publisher wanted a photograph of Swamiji with rudraksha-mala, lines of sacred ash on the forehead and arms, and the sannyasin's staff, etc., but the North Indian publisher had quite a different idea. Moreover, they demanded an 'appropriate' pose for each book. That was their idea of what the public would expect: and they were right. Every time, Swamiji had to carry all the 'props' all the way to Hardwar. He would bundle up a tiger skin, a gown, a yoga dandam (a piece of wood fashioned into an arm rest for use in practise of pranayama), etc., and walk from Swarg Ashram to Rishikesh railway station with a kamandalu (water pot) in his hand. Once he had to have a photograph taken at short notice, and therefore resorted to a cheap roadside 'studio'.

What mattered to Swamiji was publication of his book, the dissemination of spiritual knowledge, not his reputation. Once he was returning from a tour of Meerut, and en route he received a demand for a photograph. He promptly went back to Lucknow. He had not had a

shave. The photographer immortalised the bearded form.



Photo taken by a 'roadside photographer'

It was in 1932 that P.C. Mull of Lucknow took the first good studio portraits of Swamiji; they adorn the first publications of Swamiji's earliest works.

In 1934 Swami Paramanandaji purchased a 'Brownie 620' box camera for Rs.3. "I struggled hard to purchase an 8 mm movie camera," said Paramanandaji, "but Swamiji would not allow any money to be spent on it." Somehow, out of the donations received for the Birthday in 1939, the 8mm movie camera was purchased. Once this was done

everyone realised its importance. How much more inspiring to 'see Swamiji in action'! A devotee might derive inspiration from a portrait; but a devout disciple wants to see his guru in action. To him it is a living scripture.

A couple of years later the Rajah of Atgarh presented the ashram with a 16mm movie camera and also a projector. This was a boon.

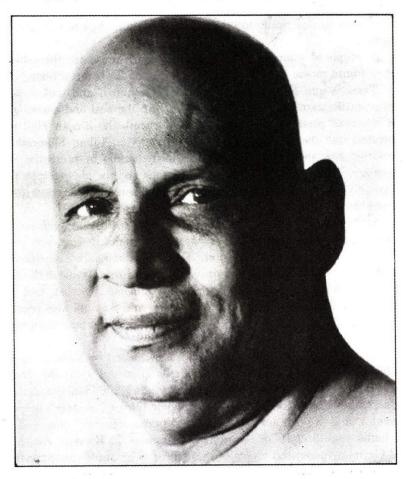
Then Swami Saradanandaji joined the ashram, and took a keen interest in the cameras. Swamiji found in him the zeal and enthusiasm that deserved promotion. A small 'hole' beneath the Bhajan Hall was converted into the photographic dark room. Mrs. Lilian Shamash of California gave the first major impetus to the studio by presenting the Speedographic camera. Swamiji's photographs and the photographs that visitors obtained standing by his side were all taken and processed in the ashram itself.

At the same time a row of rooms was being constructed, with several rooms on the ground floor. One of these, because of its size, was good only as the photographic dark room. Swami Saradanandaji occupied it and transformed it into what was universally acclaimed as one of the best studios in India. His utterly selfless and intense devotion and his unbounded enthusiasm won Swamiji's heart, and Swamiji also equally enthusiastically encouraged him in the acquisition of the best equipment for the studio.

The Sivananda Art Studio was formally opened by Swamiji on the Mahasivaratri day, 25th February 1949. Its contribution to the divine cause of the Society is inestimable. It won the admiration and gratitude of the aspirant-world by making available movie films of Swamiji's life and activities, and of yoga asanas, kriyas and pranayamas demonstrated by the hatha yogi disciples of Swamiji. Yoga schools in London, Australia and Germany possessed copies of these films. The Studio maintained a pictorial, factual record of the sage's actions, so that viewers could see Swamiji bouncing like a boy, singing, dancing, greeting, sweeping, swimming and conversing with distinguished visitors. During one of Paramanandaji's tours of South India he exhibited these films at all branches of the Society; and similarly, during his tours to Gujerat Sri Swami Chidanandaji also exhibited them for the benefit of those who had a longing to have Swamiji's darshan but were unable to go to Rishikesh.

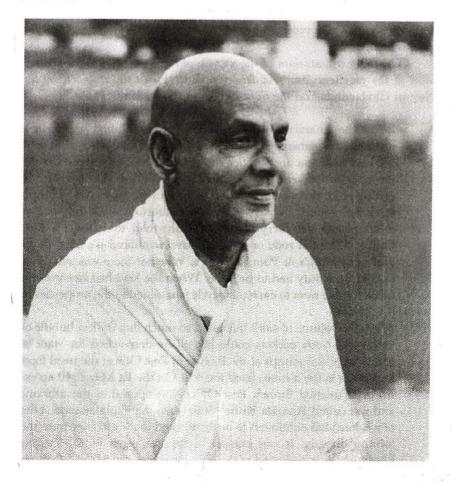
The photographs have been of immeasurable value to spiritual aspirants and particularly to the disciples of Swamiji. It has been the unique experience of many seekers — both in India and abroad — that the photograph of Swamiji 'talks' to them. When they have a problem to

solve they pray in front of the photograph and get the answer.



The photographs have been a life-saver to many. For instance one kept the company of Sri Rani Sivananda-Kumudini of Hyderabad when she was operated on: and sure enough, the pain became endurable. She had adorned all the walls of her room with Swamiji's portraits so that she could have his darshan whichever way she turned. The beautiful picture of Swamiji on a locket saved the life of Sri Mohini Giri when she was ailing. To none of them has it been a mere picture. To every disciple of Swamiji, to every spiritual aspirant, the picture has been a living reality, a divine presence.

Under the able management of Sri Swami Saradanandaji the Studio grew by leaps and bounds, both in equipment and utility. His achievements evoked the unqualified admiration of even professional photographers of great reputation and standing. A distinguished visitor to the ashram was wonderstruck when Saradanandaji presented him with an enlarged print of a picture taken a few minutes earlier, when the visitor had entered the ashram. More-than-life-size enlargements of Swamiji's pictures adorned the Regalia and the Eye Hospital. Saradanandaji would humbly confess the secret behind all these: "It is all due to Swamiji's grace. Who but he would take such interest in our betterment in every way? Even my own father would not have so readily granted everything I asked for."



The Post Office

Three departments at Ananda Kutir may be said to represent the heart of Swamiji — the Sivananda Publication League, the Annapurna Annakshetra (kitchen and dining room) and the post office. These three together enabled him to give himself to entire mankind. Paramanandaji bears witness to the care with which Swamiji used to allocate the few rupees he would get as donations during the early years of his life in Rishikesh. The first share would go to the printing press. The next would go to the post office: the printed gift should reach the aspirants all over the world. Swamiji and his workers could, of course, go to the alms-houses for their food! It is said that in order to prevent even these noble austere seekers from acquiring a love of luxury Swamiji would always maintain a good debt level with the grocers and milkmen who supplied the ashram. Whatever money was received would immediately go to the press and the post office.

The following account of the growth of the post office is an adaptation of the excellent 'Story of Ananda Kutir Post Office' given by Sri Swami Chidanandaji on the occasion of its twelfth anniversary:

Before the Ananda Kutir Post Office was established the sadhak inmates who gathered round Swamiji's feet to lead a life of earnest spiritual sadhana and service to guru, themselves constituted the inmates, the workers, the servants and everything. The question of getting work done by others and paying them wages did not even enter their minds. A part of the most laborious work they had to perform was the carrying of the daily mail to Rishikesh Post Office. The mail rode on Swami Visveswaranandaji's head or on Saswat Swamiji's or Poornabodhji's. Whether there was sun, rain or cold, this duty had to be done. When the load had become too much for one man to carry, a bicycle was added to the properties of the ashram.

When the volume of work increased so much that the big bundle of letters and book packets could not all be despatched for want of sufficient postal stamps at the Rishikesh Post Office, the need for a post office at the ashram itself was felt. On the 1st May 1940 an extra departmental Branch Post Office was opened at the ashram, and was called 'Ananda Kutir'. Since then the jnana ananda (bliss of wisdom) has continued to be distributed the world over from the ashram directly. It was housed in the last room in the kitchen block, which is now used as the store room. Swami Vishuddhanan-

da, ably assisted by Poornabodhji — who was the postmaster — managed this department. When the latter had to go to South India the work was taken over by Sri Atmaramji. By then the work had grown to such an extent that the previous practice of letting it be handled part-time by an inmate had to be given up, and Atmaramji had to be given over to this department. The expansion, especially after the Diamond Jubilee, was such that this postmaster had to be given two others to assist him.

The postal officials at the district headquarters (Dehra Dun) were watching with amazement the rapid growth of their income from their branch office at Ananda Kutir. Rishikesh Post Office, too, felt it burdensome to re-handle the Ananda Kutir mail bags before onward transmission. At last they decided that the time had come to upgrade Ananda Kutir into a sub post office. Sri Swami Chaitanyanandaji was selected to work as the postmaster.

The formal ceremony was held on the 11th November, 1949. The Inspector of Post Offices requested Swamiji to be the first to put the date stamp on. Uttering the sacred pranava (OM), Swamiji took all the stamps one by one, and franked the registers with his own hands. Thus came into being the largest extra-departmental post office in the whole state.

That same afternoon the driver of the mail van came to the ashram and wanted to take the bags to the van, which he had stationed a couple of furlongs away. He thought that the ashram's post office would only send a small bag. When he was shown what awaited him he ran back to get the van and parked it right at the door of the ashram!

During the period that Swami Chaitanyanandaji was the postmaster the post office received efficiency certificates and the unstinted praise of the postal authorities.

Swami Kesavanandaji became the postmaster immediately after Swami Chaitanyanandaji. This dynamic swami was very keen to do everything himself — he was the cashier of the ashram and had the powers of a secretary, and he was in charge of typing and sending out Swamiji's articles to various newspapers, compiling books, etc. A year or so after he took over as the postmaster he found that the work was beyond his capacity, which resulted in confusion entering into the accounts of both the Postal Department and the Divine Life Society. He suddenly left the ashram. By this time the post office had grown into an institution. It

was considered inadvisable for the Society to continue to undertake responsibility of running it as an extra-departmental post office: hence it was handed over to the government to be conducted as a departmental post office. It was during Kesavanandaji's tenure of office that Ananda Kutir post office was re-christened 'Shivananda Nagar' post office.

Swamiji treated even the departmental staff of the post office as disciples and inmates of the ashram, and he continued to take a keen interest in the post office. With his grace the government sanctioned a telephone which would also transmit the Society's telegrams. This service was inaugurated on the 14th June 1955, with Swamiji himself sending the first message to Sri Pannalal of Amritsar.

On the 14th August 1956 the Government installed a telegraph apparatus at the post office, facilitating quick transmission of messages. The telephone remained as the ashram's private connection.

It was the unique trait of Swamiji that every facility added to the ashram opened up for him yet another avenue for his message to be conveyed to thirsting aspirants, another channel for his service to flow through to the seekers after Truth. "I will make the very best use of the telegraph apparatus," he said, and began to send telegraphic instructions to his foremost disciples. The first telegrams were sent to the Director-General, Post and Telegraphs, New Delhi and the Postmaster General, Lucknow. Every day he would send one or two telegrams to chosen disciples, national leaders and even foreign disciples and seekers after Truth.

This went on for a couple of months, till there was material enough for the book *Telegraphic Teaching*, and the telegraph office had been established. This was obviously unique and unprecedented. We read a telegram with greater attention than we do a letter. Swamiji made use of this psychological factor to impress upon his disciples the instruction he wanted to convey to them. To us a telegram implies urgency. By resorting to telegrams as one of the media of imparting spiritual instructions Swamiji taught us that spiritual practice is as urgent as any other aspect of our life here. The replies that were received from the recipients of the telegrams amply justified Swamiji's expectations. It made everyone meditate deeply over the purpose and purport of the telegram. It created an indelible impression on the mind of the recipient.

Sivananda Primary School

Swamiji noticed many young boys and girls in the locality living without proper education facilities. He therefore opened a primary school

for their benefit. Thus the Sivananda Primary School was established on Vijayadasami Day, 15th October 1943. It was a boon to the children of the locality. More than education in the three R's, they received instructions in ethics, morality and the fundamentals of a truly spiritual life from Swamiji himself, from sadhak inmates who sometimes took the classes and from the pious teachers employed by the ashram. This was yet another field of selfless service for the ashramites with teaching ability.



Sivananda Primary School pupils

The primary school earned the recognition of the government, which paid for the fees of the teacher. The children of the school always distinguished themselves in all fields of activity. Swamiji himself trained them in singing kirtans, delivering short lectures and taking part in spiritual dramas. They always did well in all their examinations. In society they conducted themselves in an exemplary manner, and thus brought credit and glory to their families, the ashram, Swamiji himself and to the unique system of education adopted by him.

The March 1950 number of $\it The \, Divine \, Life$ magazine gives us the following report:



Swamiji trained the children to sing kirtans

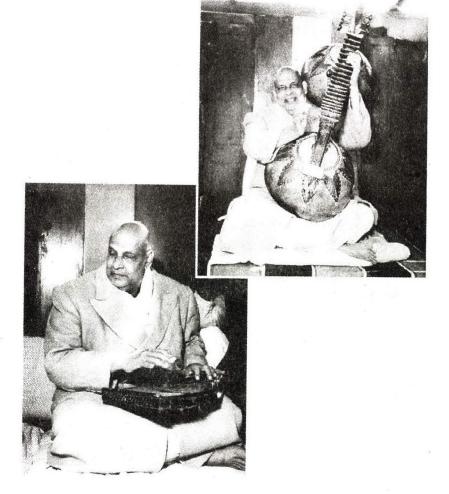
To help poor students to continue their studies is one of the aims of the Divine Life Society. Already at the headquarters a primary school with free boarding and lodging is being run very efficiently by the Society for the past nine years. Yet, other students in various provinces should also be helped. With this in view, a 'Scholarship Scheme' for granting financial aid to poor students was instituted by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj on the Diamond Jubilee Day, in September 1947. Besides such aid, these students are provided with rich spiritual literature and guidance. (And the report goes on to give a list of names of those who had till then been benefited under this scheme.)

Sanskrit

In 1944 Swamiji established another institution — the Saraswathi Sanskrit Vidyalaya — in order to popularise the learning of Sanskrit, the language of the gods. Swamiji had always exhorted all spiritual aspirants to learn Sanskrit in order to be able to read and understand the scriptures (Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, etc.) in the original. An ashramite who was well versed in the language took the class and instructed the students. Sri Swami Krishnanandaji, Sri Swami Chaitanyanandaji and Sri Swami Jnananandaji were successively the Sanskrit acharyas (teachers). It is an eloquent tribute to this institution that even foreigners learnt Sanskrit under these able teachers.

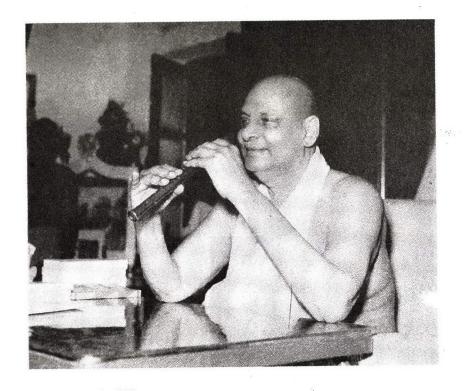
Sivananda Music School

To Swamiji the Fine Arts were just so many fine roads to the goal of life — God-realisation. He had not only a genuine taste for music and dance, but from his boyhood he had taken a keen interest in them. Sri P.R. Subbier (a close relative of Swamiji in his youth and a college-mate, who met Swamiji after half a century of separation, in November 1959) was thrilled when he heard Swamiji's ringing voice: "How wonderful," he said. "In spite of age and ailments he has preserved the vibrant tone of his powerful voice. He used to thrill us in those days, and we used to love to listen to him."



Whenever an aspirant with musical talent joined the ashram Swami-ji would inspire him to teach music to some of the inmates. Sri Raghavia (who conducted a music school in Swamiji's name at New Delhi), Sri Swami Sivaswaroopji and Sri Swami Nadabrahmanandaji were given all facilities to conduct music classes during their stay in the ashram. Sri Swami Vidyanandaji taught veena music and many visitors — especially foreign seekers — kept him busy throughout the day. He taught them to sing the Lord's name to the accompaniment of the veena. Even visiting music teachers were made by Swamiji to give music tuition to ashramites. No opportunity would be overlooked!

'Ananda Nada Mandir', as the music school was called, was given a proper shape (and a constitution) on the 6th December, 1955.





Enjoying music by the Ganges

The College of Yoga and Vedanta

Swamiji had had a pre-vision of the world-wide revival of interest in yoga and vedanta that we are witnessing today: and he used to call the Sivananda Ashram itself the 'Ananda Kutir Forest University'. He had seen the urgent need of giving systematic training to seekers after Truth and more particularly to those who might be called upon to deliver the message of yoga and vedanta to the people of not only awakened and liberated India, but of the whole world at large. The following detailed scheme published in the May 1947 issue of *The Divine Life* gives us a glimpse of what he felt:

The world is now in the grip of evil forces. Blinded by greed and power, nations have destroyed one another. They still retain hatred in their hearts and are but awaiting the time for a further display of brute force. The thinker asks in despair: "Will there be lasting peace? Will civilisation survive?" The answer is "Yes, if the wise and the good all over the world will join hands."

No good was ever done in the past without the exercise of spiritual power. The development of that power is an art which can and must be learnt. Brute force can be overcome by spiritual force. Now is the time to acquire that power. That is why the College of Yoga and Vedanta is going to be started in Rishikesh. Advanced souls content in normal times to enjoy inner happiness in solitary

meditation are now bestirred into activity in the outer world. They cannot bear the sight of the suffering and the distress existing all around us. They are ready to impart their spiritual power to those who desire to have it for the good cause of stemming the tide of advancing evil.

The College of Yoga and Vedanta will be established at Rishikesh on the banks of the Holy Ganges with the sole object of making mankind spiritually vibrant. It will be a centre for the generation of spiritual energy, whose currents are to reach kindred souls all over the globe. Eligible trainees will be admitted from the four corners of the earth, to receive this spiritual force. They will be initiated in all the processes of Self-realisation by a combination of the teachings and practices of all schools of yoga and vedanta. After training they will become the most potent instruments of good wherever they go. They will carry spiritual power with them and revitalise society. All those who come in contact with them will become immune to the pernicious propaganda of the destroyers of true happiness. It is the aim of the College to make its trainees competent to establish similar spiritual centres in different parts of the world so that the teaching received from the parent institution may permeate everywhere. These centres will purify the world, purge it of its present evils, and make it the abode of true bliss.

The workings of the College will be in three departments or branches:

- 1. Sastra-inana Branch (theoretical studies).
- 2. Sadhana Branch (practice).
- 3. Abhyasa yoga Branch (research and intensive meditation).

Besides work in the above-mentioned branches, combined work will be done every day by all the residents in the College (except the abhyasa yoga branch members) according to long-established and well-founded methods for the creation of spiritual vibrations.

At fixed hours of the day there will be conducted (1) common prayer, (2) nama-sankirtan and (3) silent meditation for invoking the aid of the Higher Powers for the enlightenment and purification of humanity. It is well-known to men of Self-realisation that these practices are most effective in the generation of spiritual electricity.

(Though the College did not materialise as such, Swamiji's detailed planning was amazing.)

The Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy

Out of the idea of the college grew the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy (called University at its inception — the word 'University' was altered to 'Academy' by the Divine Life Trust in September 1958.)

As though in response to the wish of the sage, scholars well versed in the philosophy and the scriptures of India joined the ashram. Foremost among them were Prof. Nanda Kishore Srivastava, M.A., L.L.B., and Prof. C.V. Narayana Iyer, M.A., L.T., (who later became Swami Sadananda). Regular classes were started with their aid and with the help of Swami Chidanandaji, Swami Krishnanandaji and Swami Harisharanandaji, the senior swamis of the ashram.

The syllabus was drawn up and a list of the texts that the students were expected to master was given. We shall only note here the practical side of the syllabus, under the headings 'Karma Yoga' and 'Bhakti Yoga':

KARMA YOGA (Practical): Doctoring and nursing the sick; spinning and weaving to provide clothing for the poor; helping villagers in agriculture and gardening; helping the coolies in their work; supplying water to wayfarers; service for the well-being of society; service of the country through peace missions; dissemination of spiritual knowledge; distribution of leaflets and pamphlets on spiritual education; propaganda and lecturing; training school students in the spiritual path; and writing articles on spiritual renaissance.

BHAKTI YOGA (Practical): japa, kirtan, bhajan and parayana; formal puja and prayer; service in the temple; service of saints; satsang; performance of ceremonies; fasting; vigil and akhanda kirtan.

Needless to say Swamiji always laid greater emphasis on the practical aspects of yoga and vedanta than the theoretical aspect.

Distinguished visiting scholars were invited to take the classes during the period of their stay. Foremost among them were Prof. Burtt of America, Dr. Graham Howe of London, Dr. Maryse Choisy of Paris, Dr. Kameswara Sarma of Pudukkotai, Sri Satchidanandam Pillay of the Annamalai University and Sri R.A. Shastri.

In answer to the question by a visiting professor, Swamiji gave the difference between the Yoga Vedanta Forest University and other universities: "Other universities prepare students for bread-winning, but the university here prepares students to become sadhus and saints. In the

world, students try to become paid professors after finishing their studies, but the students from here go in for preaching; they do not want a salary. They have no connection with their families. They study kundalini yoga, vedanta and the six schools of philosophy. Some specialise in hatha yoga, some in vedanta. They have no desire for name and fame."



Swami Chidananda (seated on Swamiji's left) lectures at the Forest University

Those who felt that the university had few students and fewer buildings of its own and expressed their feelings to Swamiji, got a nice answer, as did one visitor to the ashram on the 21st January 1949. Swamiji said:

This is not a university like the others in the world. People are not trained here to become clerks, advocates and scientists. Humanity has nowadays so demeaned itself that people everywhere want only sense-pleasures: they have no idea of yoga and vedanta, or the supreme bliss that they will enjoy from Atma-jnana. In such a topsy-turvy world it is a great thing to have even one good sadhaka bent on renouncing worldly pleasures and striving to attain God-realisation — the goal of life — through the practices of yoga. That there are even a dozen students earnestly endeavouring to realise the Truth in the Yoga Vedanta Forest University is a great achievement: that qualifies it to be called the greatest university in the world.

We should develop this Forest University nicely by concentrating all our attention on it. The University has a great future. Indian culture was born in such universities (or ashrams as they were called in those days.)

The hours of the University classes are a little inconvenient for worldly people. Sannyasin-sadhaks who have made it their sole end and aim to aspire for God-realisation would love to attend classes in brahmamuhurta (4 a.m. - 6 a.m.), for that is the most favourable hour for filling the mind with spiritual ideas.

For the sake of the visitors and laymen-sadhaks we should hold regular classes in the morning between 9 and 11 a.m. and in the evening between 3 and 5 p.m. Continuous classes should be conducted so that the visitors who come to the ashram in the morning and evening and who do not, in the first instance, have the opportunity to stay on in the early morning next day too, can attend the meditation and asana classes.

The seed has been sown. The Lord will look to its success. We should also in course of time construct big school buildings and professors' quarters with a good library for each professor, and other conveniences. More and more professors will come. The message of sannyasa will spread. The glory of Divine Life will spread far and wide; ministers and governors will come and get initiated into sannyasa. To them, too, the message should go that they are simply wasting their life uselessly in worldly pursuits. The world is false; Brahman alone is real. It is useless to reform the world. The only duty of man is to realise his own Self. Only this can solve the problem of life and death.

Students from all over the world will come. There should be a big

hostel to house foreign students. There should be many professors delivering lectures to these students. The whole world will be represented at the University. True sadhaks will come from America and Europe. It is all His work!

These words proved to be prophetic! Within a decade the University attracted students from America and Europe, and there has been a continuous stream of visiting students coming from all over the world to stay for some time to study vedanta and practice yoga.



Swamiji with the professors of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy.

Left to right: Swami Vishnudevananda, Swami Saswatananda, Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Krishnananda, Swami Chidananda, Swamiji, Swami Raghavananda, Swami Sivanarayana.

The Sivananda Regalia

Above the post office was the Sivananda Regalia. On the day it was formally opened (9th January, 1956), Swamiji paid the following tribute to Paramanandaji, who brought it into being:

"Swami Paramananda has got original ideas. It was he who built the Bhajan Hall, collecting donations from people; it was he who started the Publication League; it was he who organised my All-India Tour. He was responsible for bringing out German and French translations of my books. He wrote to the publishers and induced them to take up the translations. He has spread my knowledge throughout foreign countries. He is a very hard worker. He works the whole night."

For the Sivananda Regalia Sri Swami Paramanandaji gathered together all the inspiring articles associated with Swamiji's life in Rishikesh — from the earliest days to the present day — from the begging bowl that he carried for getting bhiksha (alms) from the almshouse, to the silver caskets in which the people of Madras presented him a Welcome Address during the All-India Tour. Within the four walls of the Regalia were packed the living memories of Swamiji's dynamic service. It gave a visual picture of the history of the Divine Life Society.

The Yoga Museum

The Yoga Museum was one of the unique creations of Swamiji. It was a vital part of the Academy. Every section contained a few well-chosen illustrations which gave a succinct, clear and comprehensive idea of the fundamentals of yoga. The nature of the Absolute and the nature of phenomena; the transcendental Being and the immanent Godhead; the path of inward contemplation (jnana yoga); the path of mystic communion (raja yoga); the path of devotion (bhakti yoga) as well as the path of divine dynamism (karma yoga) were all 'shown' in the Museum through such pleasing pictures that one assimilated the great ideas framed in them without irksome toil. It was a boon especially to Western aspirants who were new to Eastern philosophical thought.

Yet another novelty was the Sivananda Vani (Broadcasting Centre) which Swami Sivananda inaugurated at Ananda Kutir on 29th March 1950. An interesting daily programme was broadcast through a loudspeaker which had been installed on the top of the Viswanath hillock overlooking the Muni-ki-Reti valley. Every morning at 4 a.m. the programme commenced with the chanting of Om, kirtan, recitation from the *Bhagavad Gita*, etc. During the day, from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., discourses in Hindi and Garhwali on socio-spiritual topics, bhajan and sankirtans of talented musicians, and gramophone records by Sri Swamiji Maharaj and others, were broadcast. News of the day-to-day ashram activities and announcements were also broadcast.

DISSEMINATION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

Swarg Ashram

While Swamiji was at Swarg Ashram, pilgrims and visitors used to come very often to him for satsang, conversations on religion and spiritual subjects, and advice. People found in him one who could grasp their inner difficulties and understand their problems, and who was able to answer their questions with sympathy and sound judgement. He became the centre of eager crowds that constantly questioned him on spiritual sadhana — the inner obstacles, experiences, peculiar difficulties etc. — as well as on personal problems. They also put doubts before him for clearing. Swamiji used to help them to the best of his ability and suggested suitable ways and means to deal with their sadhana, giving them methods based upon his own experiences.

The practical value of his advice began to be greatly appreciated, and this set Swamiji thinking that perhaps there were others with similar problems who might also be benefited. Hence the idea of writing it down and distributing it among a greater number, came to his mind. In him, to think was to act. Each day he would recall and write down the queries and doubts of his daily visitors. Then he would put down answers, suggestions and instructions.

Under the most unfavourable conditions, he went on working. Pushing ahead with a grim, silent determination, ignoring all adversity, he brought about the remarkable phenomenon of a spiritual regeneration (wrought by proxy) in regions almost half-way round the globe. When his small early pamphlets brought him letters of warm appreciation, the sannyasin in him promptly tore them to bits and threw them into the

Ganges. He persisted in his writing, struggling against heavy odds. At times he had to hunt out little scraps of waste paper, collect them together and make them into a little book. To record his ideas and experiences he at times wrote on the inner side of discarded envelopes he chanced to come across. At other times he could not get ink, and when he had ink he had to give up writing after dusk for want of a lamp. Sometimes he had both, but was forced to pass the night in darkness, alone with his thoughts, as there was no oil for the light, or it could not be lit as the last match had been burnt. Providence alone knew when another match-box or a fresh supply of oil for the lamp would come. With all this to contend with even at the very outset, in some strange way he was able to bring about a revolution in the life and activities of zealous groups of people far away in the West.

In the beginning he had to work single-handed, his sole credentials being his determination to do his best to help others, the power of his inner sadhana and his absolute dependence on God. Such aspirants as came to his side later on were mostly young and inexperienced, themselves needing his help at every step, rather than being capable of great help in his work.

With a good deal of humour Swamiji would relate how he came to see his first pamphlet in print. A very devout soul called Chand Narian Harkauli became greatly attached to him, being impressed by his earnestness and severe adherence to the vow of non-possession. Once he gave Swamiji a Rs.5 note and begged him to use it to purchase milk for himself. In later years, indicating the stock of his books and pamphlets etc., Swamiji would say, "You see all this around me? Well, this is Chand Narian's 'milk'." Then he would explain. "When he gave me Rs.5 I felt it to be the direct gift from the Almighty Himself. Here I was, chafing to get some decent paper to put some of my ideas in print, and unasked the money came into my open palms. Many of my jottings were awaiting such a windfall as this. I at once used the money in getting my first pamphlet printed. It was called *Brahma-Vidya* (God Realisation). It was immediately distributed to all who came to me."

This pamphlet was much liked by many readers, who urged him to share more of his ideas and came prepared to undertake the printing of the booklets. So it led to a second tract, *Metaphysics of the Inner Man*, and a third and a fourth, etc. Thus had God willed that Chand Narian's milk for one man became life-giving ambrosia to hundreds and thousands.

Some Journals - My Magazine of India being one of the earliest

among them — had invited Swamiji to contribute regular articles to them. Swamiji had very gladly agreed: but it was not easy!

Swami Paramanandaji related:

Swamiji would write an article of three or four pages. He would need three or four copies for sending to different journals. He would quietly come to me and ask me to take a copy. I would gladly do it. The next day I would find Prakash copying the same thing. On the third day, it would be Vivekananda's turn. If he had told me: "I want three copies of this article," I would have refused. Swamiji understood human psychology to such an extent. Moreover, by this wonderful method he ensured that all of us had the first chance of reading his inspiring articles. Immediately the copy was ready Swamiji would read it and carry out all the corrections. I would struggle to read the Sanskrit words, and Swamiji's articles contained a Sanskrit word in every line: he would take that as an opportunity to teach me. A wonderful combination of work, upadesha (instruction) and sadhana.

To relieve this great strain upon Swamiji and the first disciples, Sri P.K. Vinayagam of My Magazine of India presented Swamiji with a typewriter — a 'Royal' machine which served the mission loyally for over twenty years. A cyclostyle machine was presented to Swamiji by Sri P.K. Vinayagam in 1932: and Swamiji at once thought of the best way to make use of this gift from God. At once he began cyclostyling what was known as Forest Talks.

Swamiji also published small pamphlets entitled Formulae In Yoga, Yoga in Daily Life, Forty Golden Precepts and many others in different places, and distributed them free.

In 1937 a Remington duplicator was purchased. The Forest Talks were transferred to that machine.

When these free tracts had gained popularity, and when Swamiji had found that seekers after Truth were clamouring for his teachings, he turned to the *Bhagavad Gita*, even as all the great teachers before him had done. He wrote his own commentary, and wanted to distribute this great knowledge free. A notification published in *The Divine Life* magazine on the 1st December 1939 announced:

FREE PUBLICATIONS: The Divine Life Series pamphlets and leaflets containing practical instructions for all aspirants on karma,

bhakti, yoga and vedanta, are printed: 2,000 copies of each. Day by day the publications are increasing. Now we are printing 1,000 copies of the *Bhagavad Gita*, with original text, word-for-word meaning and notes and commentary by Sri Swami Sivanandaji based on Sankara's commentary. The first part of over 100 pages containing the first three chapters will be ready by the middle of December 1939 and the remaining chapters will be completed during the year 1940. We desire that members should not miss even a single chapter of this important publication.

The books and leaflets had, of course, to be printed elsewhere. Chance donations were utilised for this. A free literature fund had been created by Swamiji: the donor of such a small amount as Rs.5 or Rs.25 could get a leaflet or pamphlet printed for free distribution. Every one who wrote a letter to Swamiji and everyone who sent even the smallest donation, got some leaflet or pamphlet. The Address Register did the magic; in it Swamiji entered the names of all the donors. Donations of big amounts were unknown in the 1930s; but, the four-anna*wallas, eightanna-wallas and the few one-rupee-wallas had earned a permanent place of love in the heart of Swamiji. Only one or two were five-rupee-wallas and only one (Dr. B.A. Vaidya of Nagpur) was a ten-rupee-walla. But it has to be admitted, as a great tribute to these great promoters of the mission, that all of them were very regular in this contribution, so Swamiji could plan ahead for the expenditure of unreceived income and anticipated donation. This he always did, to ensure that the money was not otherwise spent!

When Swamiji went out on propaganda tours or to preside over Sankirtan Conferences in those days, he naturally came into contact with many devotees. They helped the cause by donating money for printing leaflets and pamphlets. Swamiji made it a point to have some spiritual literature printed for free distribution at the Conferences; this was one of the most essential items. Again, Swamiji's articles published in the My Magazine had attracted public notice and Sri P.K. Vinayagam himself came forward to publish Swamiji's books.

Earlier, in 1929, Swamiji had his first book, viz., Practice of Yoga Vol. One published by Messrs. Ganesh and Co. The next book that Swamiji wrote was Practice of Vedanta. As soon as the manuscript was ready he sent it to Ganesh and Co. They also published A Trip to Kailash.

^{*}Anna — small Indian coin; 1/16th of a rupee

In the meantime Sri Swami Paramanandaji had joined Swamiji in Swarg Ashram. Paramanandaji was sent to Madras. There then came into being a most fruitful partnership (spiritual and therefore entirely selfless) for the dissemination of spiritual knowledge.

Of this Swamiji wrote to Paramanandaji on the 29th July, 1936:

Glory to Sri Vinayagam for broadcasting my thoughts, and glory to Sri Paramanandaji for his magnificent production of the third edition. It is simply grand... Now let us divide — 40 percent to P.K.V., 40 percent to Paramananda and 20 percent to Siva!

The first three books were taken over from Ganesh and Co. by Sri P.K. Vinayagam, who published a number of Swamiji's books under the

general title of the Himalayan Yoga Series.

The following books formed the Himalayan Yoga Series: Yogic Home Exercises; Kundalini Yoga; Practice of Vedanta; Raja Yoga; Inspiring Letters; Practice of Yoga, Vols. I and II; Spiritual Lessons Part I and II; How to Get Vairagya; Yoga Asanas; Science of Pranayama; Conversations on Yoga; Mind — Its Mysteries and Control; and Brahmacharya.

The publicity machinery of My Magazine itself was there to promote the distribution of copies, and these books became very popular throughout the country and overseas too. Sri Vinayagam quickly brought out Swamiji's books, one after another. The books ran into many editions as there was constant demand for them and the publisher was eager to meet the demand. Sri Vinayagam also published Swami Paramanandaji's Life and Teachings of Siva (the first biography of Swamiji).

The guidance that Vinayagam and Paramanandaji received from Swamiji himself revealed the latter's amazing knowledge of the art of book-manufacture. Here is a highly interesting and revealing example,

written on 29th July, 1936:

Swamiji, after the inner title page, before the photo, insert one blank sheet with the name of the book. You have forgotten in 3rd edition. Kindly do this in Volume Two. That is the modern style. The advertisement re. Volume Two at the end is a 'weeping one', not a thrilling one. It is quite ordinary. It does not give a full, select exhibit. You have done before nicely for Yoga Asanas, Kundalini, etc. Why not for this? Perhaps, the thermos was ...! Kindly insert the attached articles, Vedanta in Daily Life and Meditation, in

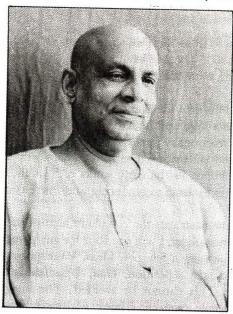
Volume Two. They are nice and practical.

However, Swamiji always wanted his ideas to stand by themselves, ungarnished by claims to fame. He wrote:

In 1933 the publishers in Madras wrote articles on my life and mentioned me as an 'avatar'. Immediately I gave a reply which explains the attitude I have always maintained. "Kindly remove all 'Krishna Avatara' and 'Bhagavan' business. Keep the publications natural and simple. Then it will be attractive. Do not exaggerate much about me very often. The juice will evaporate. Do not give me such titles as 'World Teacher', 'Mandaleshwar' and 'Bhagavan'. Lay bare the truth. Truth will shine."

Then follows a highly inspiring passage:

I cannot understand why you object to my bringing out *Practice of Yoga* Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, if I give you fresh matter. They may not be graded. But they will be new. There is no harm. Let it be a series, ad infinitum, while my eyes and body work all right.



'Knowledge must reach everybody'

In his autobiography he continues:

Let me work as long as my eyes are good, as long as I have new messages and lessons for seekers after Truth. My love to serve mankind is so great that I will continue the publication work with the help of able stenographers and secretaries even if I lose my eyesight. Let the divine work grow and bring peace and bliss to the world.

Now comes the sterner side of the master:

Don't be afraid. You can go to Uttarkashi next year. You need not go to Madras. But prepare Nijabodhji or Amritam for thy work and inform Mr. P.K.V. They are good persons. Amritam is rapidly improving. He is forgetting the world and is saturated and absorbed in the typewriter from 12 till 6 in the evening. Pray, do not stop my *Practice of Yoga* business (Volume 3, etc.). I am quite sure people will run after them like moths or butterflies.

Of this Swamiji had already had tangible proofs. He wrote in September 1934:

Many people from the Punjab came to me with a full set of my books in hand. The one beauty in these books is that people have begun to do some kind of sadhana or other, in right earnest.

Swamiji had his own ideas and did not care about non-constructive criticism. He was a sage and he had a mission: he was aware that there would always be reactionary forces to obstruct all good undertakings. He ignored them, and endeavoured to infuse that spirit into his disciples. Some one had felt that in the early works of Swamiji there were many repetitions. Here is Swamiji's convincing and interesting reply:

Received the postcard: the complaint against the repetition. That man is a great miser. I will pay Rs.2 for any pamphlet or book that can give me even a few new ideas. We cannot please the world. This world is a repetition. Gita, Upanishads, etc., are full of repetitions. This cannot be avoided. The world contains many generous people to purchase books with repetition. Anyhow, we are now on the alert to eradicate repetition. After some years, when we

bring out fresh editions, we can thoroughly overhaul each and every book, every para, every sentence.

Another publisher, Sri Em Airi of Amritsar, came forward to publish Swamiji's works, and another ashramite, Swami Yogananda, had been trained for the work. They brought out what were known as *The Self-Realisation Series*.

The third important publishers of early Sivananda Literature were the Gita Press, Gorakhpur. They published Swamiji's masterpiece: Mind — Its Mysteries and Control. This is one of the books which has always been in demand. It is a favourite with all spiritual aspirants.

Swamiji had in the meantime written a book especially for the Western students of yoga. Their number had grown considerably, since Swamiji's fame as the most practical master of yoga had spread far and wide. Westerners had already begun to write to him expressing their spiritual problems, and so Swamiji was familiar with them. A book dealing with these problems was the urgent need, and *Practical Lessons in Yoga* came into being. Messrs. Banarasi Dass of Lahore brought out this wonderful book.

The Daily Herald of Lahore published another most inspiring book by Swamiji, How to Get Vairagya.

Thus lay scattered in the hands of several publishers the precious treasures of Swamiji's Divine Life message. He had no thought of any return from his books, except that people should be benefited by it. Even in 1942 when Sri Swami Paramanandaji suggested that some publisher in Lahore might be allowed to bring out Swamiji's books in Urdu on a royalty basis, Swamiji wrote: "Yes, you can take up the four books for translation. You need not talk to the publishers about 100 copies. Let them give or not. It does not matter. We want dissemination of knowledge in Urdu-knowing public of Punjab and Delhi."

Even the royalty which any other author would fight for was given a new meaning by Swamiji. He looked at it from a different and distinct angle, characteristic of the sage that he was. He wrote to Paramanandaji on the 22nd November 1942: "Kindly give them the idea of 'Ganesh Puja' — that whenever a tree bears fruit, the first fruits should be offered to God or to a sannyasin. It is only in their own interest. Then the man prospers and gets success. Even so with the Ganesh Puja of books. If done, the publisher will attain prosperity." In either case (whether the publisher sold them or sent them to him) the result was the same to Swamiji: the copies would be distributed free by him! But, there was this

difference — there were aspirants who were in correspondence with Swamiji who would cherish the books more if they got them from the ashram: when the packet arrived it was as though Swamiji himself had come into their home. They had expressed this desire to Swamiji. Swamiji also felt that in addition to the mere leaflets and pamphlets which he was giving free to everyone who entered the ashram even just for sight-seeing, he could give the books also free. Hence it was suggested to the publishers that they should send Swamiji 100 copies as the author's 'royalty'. The publishers readily and gladly agreed to this. There was scope for these books to be sold, too.

It was felt by the Trustees of the Divine Life Trust (which had come into being in the meantime) that it would be better if there were a single institution for the publication of all of Swamiji's works, functioning under the control of the Society. Swamiji's writings could be preserved and made available to the world in a better way. The idea appealed to Major-General A.N. Sharma, who wrote: "I gave some money to another spiritual institution several years ago, for the preservation of the writings of a saint. They took up my suggestion and the institution has grown today into a dynamic centre. Herewith a cheque. I pray that Swamiji's writings should be similarly preserved for all time to come." Thus the Sivananda Publication League came into being.

At the first meeting held on the 29th January 1939 at Ananda Kutir, the aims and objects of the League were laid down as follows:

- 1. To preserve the writings of Sri Swami Sivanandaji for ever and ever and to enable future generations to draw inspiration from his powerful writings and practical lessons.
- 2. To publish the books at the lowest possible rates.
- 3. To collect the publishing rights of all the works of Sri Swami Sivanandaji and to make available to the public all such works from one source.
- 4. To utilise the profit, if any, realised from the sales of the publications of the League and the commission derived from the sale of other books, in carrying out the aims and objects of the Divine Life Society in all its aspects.

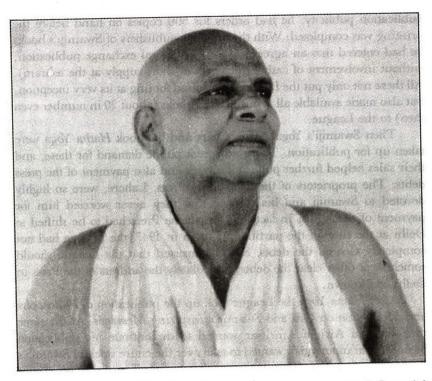
Swami Paramanandaji took up Swamiji's book Easy Steps to Yoga as the League's first publication. The Mercantile Press, Lahore, (where The Divine Life magazine was being printed) agreed to do the printing work on a credit basis. Paramanandaji was very efficient in organising pre-

publication publicity: he had orders for 500 copies on hand before the printing was completed. With the previous publishers of Swamiji's books he had entered into an agreement for the mutual exchange publication, without involvement of cash (which was in short supply at the ashram). All these not only put the League on a sound footing at its very inception, but also made available all at once all the books (about 20 in number even then) to the League.

Then Swamiji's Yoga Asana Chart and his book Hatha Yoga were taken up for publication. There was great public demand for these, and their sales helped further publication work and also payment of the press debts. The proprietors of the Mercantile Press, Lahore, were so highly devoted to Swamiji and his mission that they never worried him for payment of their bills. In fact, even when the Press had to be shifted to Delhi at the time of the partition of India in 1947, the League had not completely cleared the debts. Swamiji insisted that the League should somehow or other clear the debts immediately the address of the Press in Delhi was known.

After Hatha Yoga the League took up the publication of Philosophy and Meditation on Om and Swamiji's Inspiring Messages. At the same time Sri Em Airi of Amritsar wanted to discontinue his publication business. Paramanandaji wanted to take over the entire stock of Swamiji's books that Airi had. That meant capital outlay. There was no money except the capital with which the Trust had been established: all the ashramites were living on alms. Swamiji wrote to Paramanandaji on the 8th February, 1939: "I shall give you Rs.1000 for the capital. I have written to Rai Saheb, A.K.P. Sinha, Swami Swarupanandaji and others for suggestions. We can take the money from the capital and invest in the S.P.L. only if law can allow (whether law will allow it if we want to utilise a portion of the capital for widening and enhancing the activities of the Society)." When the legal sanction was received, this amount was available for the new venture. With it, Em Airi's stocks were transferred to Sivananda Publication League.

Swamiji had no use for the theories of financial experts. He knew only two things: knowledge must reach everybody, and that he should give, give and give whatever he had, without any thought of what it would bring. The growing institution was never allowed pause to consolidate its position. He was literally 'driving' it to greater and yet greater service. To the Divine Life Society's activities were daily added more and more 'expenditure' departments. The publication branch needed planning, and planning meant income and controlled expenditure — all of which



were alien to Swamiji's spirit. Hence there was a perpetual financial crisis! Swamiji encouraged it so that the stress would keep the selfless workers working harder, they would not lose the spirit of renunciation, and his message would reach the greatest number of people within the

shortest possible time.

In spite of all these financial difficulties, to which were added the difficulties of procuring paper (those were the days of World War II), the League managed to bring out over twenty books of Swamiji's before December, 1944. The establishment at Calcutta by Sri Swami Kaivalyanandaji (a dynamic disciple of Swamiji) of a branch of the Sivananda Publication League, contributed in part to this initial success of the League's labours. This Swami was well-versed in business methods; and the twenty books that he eventually took over for publication by the branch at Calcutta quickly ran into several editions. Among these books were Sure Ways for Success in Life and God-realisation, Ten Upanishads and Stories from Yoga Vasishtha, etc.

The second phase of the work of the Publication League showed an enormous increase in output. During the Sivananda Diamond Jubilee,

donations were received in generous measure and Swamiji, in his characteristic way, allocated the maximum amount to publications work. Sri Swami Narayanandaji was sent to Lahore to speed up the output. In addition to the Mercantile Press, he engaged the Civil and Military Gazette Press, which printed — among others — All About Hinduism and World Religions. When the Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Lahore in 1946, Swami Narayanandaji was there, and the printed forms were lying in several presses awaiting completion. No harm came to any of these. Even after Swami Narayanandaji returned, the copies of the books that were lying in the presses could be brought safely to India; and even Muslims helped in this trans-shipment.

During the same period several books were printed at Calcutta at the General Printing Works. Riots broke out here, too, but Swamiji's all-pervading grace saved the books. Mind Its Mysteries and Control, My Master, Sivananda Vijayam and Concentration and Meditation were printed there during this period.

Mrs. Liliane Shamash of California, who stayed at the ashram for about a year after the Diamond Jubilee, gave the first and greatest fillip to his mission. With a stroke of the pen she donated Rs.40,000 to Swamiji. What a great joy Swamiji felt when he flourished the cheque before her and said: "You have saved all my manuscripts. I will have them printed at once." Manuscripts were immediately despatched to several presses in different cities of India.

Months before the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, Sri Swami Paramanandaji and Sri Sivapremji went to Calcutta and had the *Diamond Jubilee Commemoration Volume* printed at the General Printing Works. That was the first work of art, a well-got-up presentation volume.

It was during this phase of the growth of the Publication League that the sale of the books was organised through well-known book-sellers. Swamiji's message took wings and began to spread.

Another great patron of the Divine Life mission, Sri Kashiram Guptaji of the General Printing Works, Calcutta, then came forward to give a further fillip to it. He announced his noble intention of donating the printing charges of no less that eighteen books of Swamiji's. This was unprecedented. At once Swamiji sent Sri Swami Narayanandaji to Calcutta. It was worth watching Swamiji on such occasions. What light and what bliss he radiated then! One who stood before him at a time when someone came forward to take part in the jnana yajna was standing in the presence of God, a presence which could be *felt*, in and through him.

No tribute could be considered adequate: Sri Kashiramji could only

be likened to Bhagiratha who brought the holy Ganga down. Kashiramji had brought the jnana (wisdom) Ganges down. Week after week a number of parcels arrived at Rishikesh railway station. Swamiji's hands were full when he gave books to visitors and sent them to aspirants all over the world. When Sri Kashiramji heard of the speed with which Swamiji was giving the books away, he said: "Let him: it is our duty to fill his shelves with fresh stocks."

Sri Jyotirmayanandaji, who was sent to relieve Narayanandaji from overwork, had to work all day and far into the night correcting proofs.

At the instance of Sri Kashiram Guptaji, the General Printing Works themselves published the Hindi translations of several of Swamiji's books, including Mind—Its Mysteries and Control, How to Get Vairagya, etc.

In the meantime the Vigyan Press had been established at Rishikesh itself. It was started with the express wish of serving Swamiji, who gradually diverted all his work to it.

The Mighty Spirit

With Swamiji money went faster than it could come. A financial crisis every year had become a routine feature in the ashram. Swamiji's reaction to this was unchanging: "We can all of us go to the kshetras and live on alms, but the jnana yajna must go on! What if these books and buildings and activities stay or go away? Should you care? If need be, we must distribute all these books free to people, if they find it difficult to buy them. This is our mission and duty. We, as sadhus, can have our alms at the kshetra any day; else, stretch our open palms before four houses and we get our bhiksha. That should suffice for a monk." In 1949 the Trustees had even decided that many inmates had to leave the ashram, while those whose services were indispensable and who were willing to stay on, had been told to get ready to go to the kshetra for bhiksha. Swamiji himself said: "Even if I cannot walk, I will come to the kshetra on a tonga: but I should not be exempted from the rule." But the situation mysteriously improved in a couple of days, before the stores ran out completely; and so the proposal was dropped.

Even during this crisis Swamiji stoutly refused to allow the three journals to be stopped or even reduced in size; no one dared even to think of interfering with the printing of books. Swamiji said: "If there is no money for postage we shall keep all the almirahs open and let visitors and pilgrims take whatever they want. At any cost, the jnana yajna must go

on."

Several Tamil books were printed during this period at the Rajah

Power Press, Madras, which Swami Paramanandaji had established in Madras to serve Swamiji.

Then came the All-India Tour, and with it more money. The financial crisis was a bad dream and was quickly forgotten. Several people in the ashram worked day and night editing books and sending them to the press. Sri Devandra Vigyani of the Vigyan Press, Rishikesh, went on increasing his staff and printing capacity to cope with the everincreasing volume of work which Swamiji entrusted to him. Another small press, the Mishra Press, had come into existence at Rishikesh in the meantime. They were also given a manuscript to print.

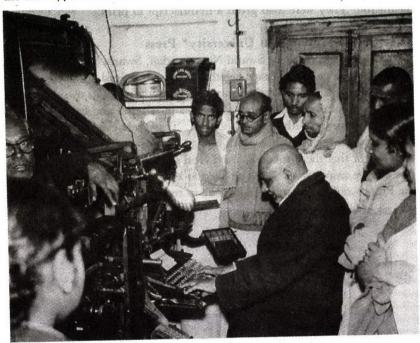
The Yoga Vedanta Forest University* Press

Swami Dayanandaji, Swami Nityanandaji, Swami Satyanandaji and Sri Sivapremji put their heads together and had arrived at the conclusion that the time had come for the ashram to have a press of its own. With the blessings of Swamiji the Mishra Press was purchased and brought over to the ashram on the 20th September, 1951. This great event opened up the era of ceaseless jnana yajna. With a press of his own Swamiji had not the least doubt that the mission enjoyed God's grace. Now he was absolutely free to give as many books as he liked to anybody, in the confidence that the Press would constantly endeavour to replenish the stocks.



^{* (}The word 'University' was changed to 'Academy' in 1958.)

It was Dayanandaji who felt that an automatic printing machine would speed up the work. The Lord's grace brought at the same time, the noble and saintly V. Srinivasan (later Swami Sahajananda) to the ashram. The complete attunement of this 'South African Sivananda' with Swamiji worked a wonder. He did not even have to be told: he volunteered to do everything possible to further the mission. He organised a collection drive in South Africa, which enabled the Press to acquire the Mercedes Automatic Printing machine, a German Automatic Folding machine and the Intertype machine.



Swamiji at the keyboard

The Mercedes Automatic Printing machine was installed in the Press on the 6th October, 1956; and the Automatic Folding Machine on the 16th November, 1956.

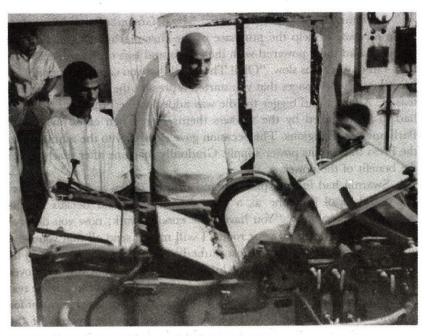
One more section needed mechanisation in order that the press would serve humanity more efficiently. Composing was done by hand and the types used were often old and worn out. This left much to be desired in the matter of printing and get-up. Once again Dayanandaji thought out a scheme and Sri Srinivasan promised help to execute it. The American Intertype machine was installed in the Press on the 4th February 1958.

Sri Pannalal of Amritsar and Sri Mizar Govinda Pai of Mangalore came forward to help the purchase of the first machines. The printing machine had to be powered with the hands and legs of the workers. The turn-out of work was slow. "Ohji! This is all that you can do? Is it only for printing these few pages that you started a press in the ashram?" Swamiji teased. Another and bigger treadle was added to the Press: but that also had to be pedalled by the workers themselves. Then came the World Parliament of Religions. The occasion gave electricity to the ashram; and the Press thus got its power-supply. Gradually machine after machine got the benefit of the power.

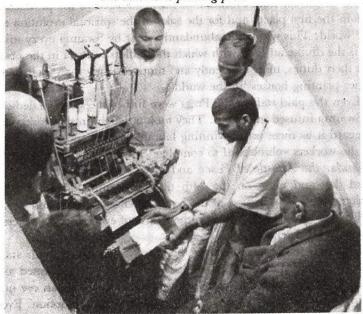
Swamiji had infinite patience and infinite drive, at the same time. He would extol someone as a great karma yogi and declare in the presence of everybody, "You have done enough work; now you deserve rest. Do not come out of your room. I will myself send all that you need to your room." Very often almost immediately (or at least very soon) he would inspire that man to plunge himself in more work again. Moreover Swamiji's own example was there before everyone: how could anyone rest on their oars when he showed by example that there was no retirement for a selfless servant? Hence he kept the pressure on the workers of the ashram 'full steam'. It was not for his sake the work was done: it was for the sake of the spiritual evolution of those engaged in the production of books in the first place, and for the sake of the spiritual evolution of the whole world. This was made abundantly clear by Swamiji every minute. This is the divine attitude with which the selfless workers in the press go about their duties, more efficiently and more ardently than their brothers in other printing houses 'in the world'.

Even the paid staff in the Press were full of the spirit of dedication that Swamiji infused into them. They took a delight in the work and did not regard it as mere bread-winning labour. For instance, in November 1953 the workers volunteered to complete Swami Paramanandaji's book Sivananda: the Apostle of Peace and Love overnight! The entire staff worked day and night on the 24th till the evening of the 25th, and completed the main portion of the book! Such is the love and devotion that Swamiji was able to inspire in the hearts of even those who were not necessarily his disciples.

Swamiji's selection of men for the jobs was an art in itself: and the Press has proved it to be unparalleled. A swami was appointed as the manager, not merely for his managing abilities but with an eye on his sincerity toward the welfare of the mission and its promotion. Even if there was a little loss in this choice it did not matter to Swamiji: it was



The automatic printing press





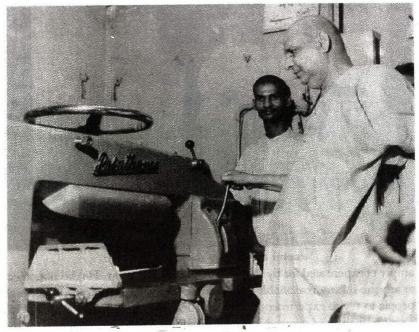
Swamiji with two of the press workers

amply compensated for by the growth of the institution. He did not object to anyone taking reasonable risks. He would, on the contrary, encourage people to try to experiment with their ideas, at his (Swamiji's) cost. This gave the feeling of ownership to the worker, a condition necessary for the rapid growth of any institution. Thus successive managers have been virtual owners of the press for the time being.

The institution must grow: the institution must serve — these were the supreme principles. The one who adhered to these principles was considered fit to assume position of any responsibility in the Press, whatever may be his other qualifications. Swamiji's choice of Swami Dayanandaji is an illustration of this. He is keenly interested in the improvement of the Press. He would gladly spend a week on the Delhi railway station platform if he could thus get a good machine or printing paper. Once a machine had been installed and had begun to function, his attention turned to the next improvement that ought to be effected.

Dayanandaji thought of acquiring a flat-bed printing machine: and immediately began to negotiate on his own initiative for its purchase. It was soon installed.

Binding of books was done in the old-fashioned way and it was impossible in the conditions existing then to give section binding for the books. Swamiji himself inspired Dayanandaji, by pointing out the difference between the production of other modern presses and the ashram's. Soon an order went out for a Martini Thread Sewing Machine, which was installed in the month of January, 1955.



The new guillotine

Since its inception the Press has brought out books at the rate of three 200 page books per month, on an average. This is in addition to the several journals that the institution is publishing. Books in English, Hindi and Tamil are printed at the Press.

Spread of Teachings

More and more people all over the world have obtained knowledge of yoga and vedanta due to the spread of Swamiji's teachings. They practise yoga and enjoy better health, more peace of mind and a greater measure of spiritual felicity. Swamiji loved to give and loved to share his knowledge with all. He expressed it beautifully in a conversation he had with a group of visitors:

Whether we have anything to eat or not, I have been sending books free, all these thirty years. Yet our almirahs are always full. I opened the ayurvedic section in order to support the free literature department. To poor people I send ayurvedic products worth thousands of rupees free. There is joy in taking for householders, while sannyasins derive pleasure in giving. Giving books, giving



medicines — so much service gives me joy, gives me strength. For me the printing of books is the greatest necessity and all other works have a secondary value. Dissemination of knowledge on the widest possible scale is my one thought. Construction, water scheme and every other work can wait. The world looks to such societies and ashrams as ours for guidance. We should go on with the publication of books and leaflets. The donor will be greatly benefited — through his money he would have served the whole world!

Swamiji said that it is perhaps too much to expect a person living in the modern world, assailed on all sides by distractions and temptations, to develop discrimination and dispassion. He said that even in the case of a person who runs away from failure it is possible to find a spark which could be fanned into a big flame. Sometimes if the spark didn't exist he even ignited it.

One of the methods adopted by him was massive dissemination of spiritual knowledge, which was done in a totally indiscriminate way. He performed indiscriminate charity and undertook indiscriminate dissemination of spiritual knowledge in the hope that one of his pamphlets or books, dropping into the hands of a man at a certain psychological moment, might ignite true aspiration in him. He used to send lots of free books to devotees and non-devotees, and among the recipients of these free books were Sir Winston Churchill (Prime Minister, London, President Truman (Washington) and Marshall Stalin (Moscow).

Once somebody said, "Swamiji, these will never reach those men." He replied, "Never mind, they are books, parceled and addressed to Moscow, London, Washington. They have got to get there. Somebody has got to open them to find out what the parcel contains. He will read them."

One day there was a letter from New York, which read:

Revered Swamiji, last week I happened to go to a Secondhand Bookshop. Accidently my eyes fell on a book *Voice of the Himalayas* by Swami Sivananda. I read a few passages from the book. I was thrilled; I purchased it. It has given me a new angle of vision towards life. I find no words to express my gratitude for the transformation you have brought forth in my life. In the *most* mysterious manner you have instilled in me the thirst to lead the

spiritual life. Kindly accept me as your disciple and guide me.

There was another rather interesting incident. One day an official letter had been received from a government department. On top of it there was the name and address of the head of that department. Immediately Swamiji autographed a book with, 'May God bless you. With regards, Prem and Om, Sivananda,' and sent it to this address. That man's name was also put on *The Divine Life* magazine free register. He received the book and a couple of days later a copy of *The Divine Life*.

Next month again there was the magazine, so he asked his assistant to write a stiff letter to the Divine Life Society saying, "Do not waste time sending these to me, I don't like them. I can't bother to look at them."

When this letter was received Swamiji said: "He doesn't want? Alright. Take his name off the Magazine Free Register. We don't want to impose a thing upon him." It looked as though the story was completed there. No. Two years later this man wrote a moving letter:

I received a book from you two years ago. Heaven knows how you got my name and address. At that time I was occupying a position of power and prestige and was so arrogant and haughty that when I received your book I threw it away. A little later I lost my job, my money and everything went wrong. One day I had suicidal thoughts and wandered into my study. Sitting dejected in a depressed mood, I happened to look up and there I saw Sure Ways for Success in Life and God-Realisation. Almost mechanically I pulled out the book, opened a page and read 'never despair'. I saw this, and suddenly I remembered that I had received this book two years ago from you and had callously thrown it into the wastepaper basket. My servant who cleaned my room had emptied the basket and thought I might have accidentally dropped that book into the basket; so he took it out, dusted it and put it on the shelf without my knowledge. So I am thankful to him and I am thankful to you. That book saved my life.'

He picked up the threads of what was left and made a success of his life.

That was Swamiji's method. Only a few of the thousands and thousands of people who received books, pamphlets and magazines from him would have made use of them in this manner, but one might strike a sympathetic cord in the heart of somebody, somewhere, at sometime.

People wondered how Swamiji found time to write when he was so busy with the management of the Divine Life Society, maintaining the ashram and training disciples. Several of them even asked Swamiji himself. Swamiji revealed that regularity was the secret of his success: "Every day I must write for some time: and whatever be the other preoccupations, I don't neglect the writing work," he said. He had done this for nearly forty years. At about twelve o'clock he would go back to his kutir to have his mid-day meal, after which he took a little rest and sat again for writing. This is one of the secrets of his successive voluminous production. He could switch on and off any compartment of his brain. As the 'writing-hour' approached, the organisational part of his brain would be shut off and the writing part switched on. Inspiring thoughts were there, ready to gush forth. When the writing-hour was over the mind was at once applied to some other department of service. The ease with which this change-over was made and the thoroughness with which it was effected was amazing.



During the 'writing hour'

Swamiji gave many practical hints for writers:

Are you all keeping a notebook to record your thoughts? First of all you should note down in this book all the new things that you learn in the class. Then there are parallel ideas that might strike you, or ideas arising from those expressed by others in the class. These may be new, novel and unknown to others. These should at once be noted down. There is one special advantage in this. First you will

hear some good points. Then you will go on thinking about them. These will give rise to other good points in you. When you start noting them down, they will grow. This will become a habit with you. You will always dwell on sublime thoughts. The mind will refuse to come down, even if invited to. This is sravana-manan-nididhyasana! (Listening, reflection, profound meditation.)

Physical, Mental and Moral Welfare

Swamiji was convinced that religion cannot be forced upon gnawing stomachs and naked backs. He made up his mind, therefore, that his works should aim at the achievement of the physical, mental and moral welfare of humanity as a necessary preliminary to spiritual illumination. After appearing to listen to the most sublime discourse on Brahman a person with a toothache will only ask, "In the name of that Infinite Almighty of yours, please tell me how to stop my toothache first." So Swamiji's books have necessarily come to be an all-comprehensive, instructive and guiding literature in themselves. Swamiji's knowledge of the subjects was well-nigh encyclopaedic and his writings are something of the nature of a complete compendium of important information, practical instruction and inspiration. Thus the result has been a wide variety of books like Sure Ways for Success in Life: Students' Success in Life; Sthree Dharma; Family Doctor, Yoga in Daily Life; Vedanta in Daily Life; Essence of Gita in Poems; Inspiring Messages; Mind, Its Mysteries and Control; Easy Steps to Yoga; etc. Each book has a peculiar distinctive feature of its own and appeals to persons of different tastes, as well as suiting the natures and meeting the needs of all kinds of people.

Fully aware of the paramount importance of good health and a sound body in attempting to do anything, Swamiji brought out a very helpful practical text book, Yoga Asanas. He pointed out clearly that the foremost duty of everyone is the preservation of one's health and the acquisition of a strong body, be it with a view of getting on in the world or for spiritual sadhana. Health is at the basis of all achievement. Through three other books — Practice of Brahmacharya, Hatha Yoga and Yogic Home Exercises — lasting contribution has been made towards awakening health-consciousness in people, especially among the student population. Till then, asanas, pranayama etc., had only been dealt with in their yogic aspect as angas (limbs) of Patanjali Maharishi's ashtanga yoga. Now, thanks to the rational approach set up by Swamiji's books, asanas and allied exercises have come to be accepted as a safe and sure means of getting and keeping good health and a sound, diseaseless

physique. They are no longer something meant exclusively for the ash-smeared and matted-haired yogi, but for all health seekers in village, town and city, young and old alike. The Family Doctor may also be classed under the books mentioned above, as it aims at the improvement and preservation of the health and strength of the nation.

Swamiji has touched on the proper training of mental faculties and the culture of ethical thought in most of his works. He has particularly dealt with it in Mind, Its Mysteries and Control and Practice of Yoga Vol. 2. Moreover, the first and the fifth chapters of Sure Ways for Success in Life are chiefly concerned with the subject of mental culture. After going through these books a reader writes to say, "I can with confidence say that three of his (Swamiji's) books Mind, Its Mysteries and Control, Sure Ways for Success in Life, and The Practice of Bhakti Yoga, are masterpiece productions. They are worth more than their weight in gold, and should be read by all aspirants, whether they aspire for fame, mammon or God-realisation."

The spiritual aspect is at once everywhere evident. It runs as the invariable underlying note in all Swamiji's works, from the major books to the smallest single-sheet leaflet.



With manuscripts of some of his books

In the traditional manner, Swamiji had taken up the four main methods of realisation and dealt with them in a comprehensive way. These four paths may be said to represent the last word in the deep research and discovery of the ancient sages, given to all humanity for all times. His books The Practice of Karma Yoga, Practice of Bhakti Yoga, Practice of Vedanta, Raja Yoga and Kundalini Yoga are such that they have a permanent place in the world of today, and surely will continue to do great good to future generations also. Each work is a complete text book upon one of the four main paths of attainment, and Swamiji has taken such pains over them that an aspirant gets from the book everything necessary for the practice of the particular yoga from start to finish. They enable the aspirant to strive in right earnest, independent of any other book or scripture. In fact each work constitutes a scripture par excellence in itself, containing as it does the pith and kernel of the original work on the subject, plus (and this is infinitely more important) the very quintessence of Swamiji's own personal findings in that line. The latter are present in the form of suggestions, valuable hints and practical helpful instructions.

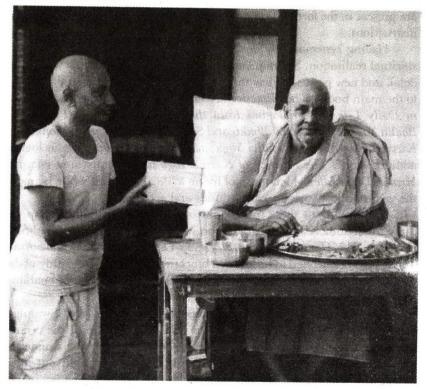
Having systematically dealt with the four fundamental methods of spiritual realisation, Swamiji later enlarged upon each of them with extra detail and new points of view through a number of works complimentary to the main books. Thus Practice of Vedanta is supplemented by Vedanta in Daily Life and Dialogues from the Upanishads; while Practice of Bhakti Yoga is followed by Bhakti and Sankirtan and Inspiring Songs and Kirtans. Raja Yoga has Hatha Yoga and Science of Pranayama as logical additions to it. The Practice of Karma Yoga has a companion volume, Yoga in Daily Life, which treats of living a life of the spirit while being in the world amidst various works, duties and activities.

After giving us these solid works on sadhana, Swamiji took up the three main authoritative sources upon which all the theory of Hinduism is based: The *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Brahma Sutras*. These are not intended to be learned brochures for the critical study of the scholar and the pundit, but have been written with the aim of enabling laymen to have access to these scriptures.

The Puranas, the store-house of Indian culture, received Swamiji's attention next. In Lord Krishna — His Lilas and Teachings, the central teaching of the sacred Bhagavatam, the substance of the wonderful discourse between the Lord and Uddhava, has been brought out most beautifully. The spirit of the Bhagavatam is presented in telling language, fresh, pure and sublime in its simplicity. The essential teachings of the

immortal work of Valmiki once more appear afresh in the pages of *The Essence of Ramayana* to immediately inspire and elevate the reader. Yet another book, *Stories from the Mahabharata*, contains all the highest philosophical and moral teachings of that sacred book. It gives in, addition, rousing accounts of the heroic lives of the great warriors and their mighty deeds of superhuman valour, unforgettable compassion, courage, self-sacrifice and loyalty.

Swamiji has collected the cream of the Vedas, the Srutis, the Puranas and other scriptures of all religions, and presented it for the ready consumption of everyone on earth. With a beautiful collection of choice Sanskrit hymns published under the name of Stotra Ratnamala, a faithful translation with commentary of Sri Sankara's Ananda-Lahari, and a book of selected stories from the Yoga Vasistha giving out the philosophy of that deeply thought-provoking work, Swamiji has more or less covered all the salient features of Hindu philosophy, Hindu scriptures and the four main sadhanas.



Swamiji receives the first copies of a new book

The Sivananda Literature Research Institute

The volume and wealth of Sivananda Literature had grown beyond anyone's expectations. Swamiji had an impatient hand, and could not wait to give. Once when there was the offer by a devotee to donate for building a kutir at the ashram, Swamiji said: "Ask him to send the money at once: when a good thought occurs, it must be fulfilled at once. Charity should not wait even a moment. We do not know what the mischievous mind will do the next moment. When you want to give anything in charity, then give it at once." That was the essence of his life and his achievement, and it was the secret of his success, his popularity and his divinity. But in the matter of the literature it created a peculiar situation. Whenever Swamiji got an extraordinary idea (granting that, according to him all the rest were ordinary!) he had to (in his own words) let it 'go seven times round the world'. It had to find a place in all the journals and had to be sent to all the newspapers which published his articles; and in order that the matter should not be lost it had to be recorded in a book any book which may have been in the press at that time. Thus many articles were added to the end and at the beginning of books which may not have had a direct bearing on the subject. To the spiritual aspirant they are all welcome. He derives inspiration from them, whatever the title of the book may be, but it is material which would have a place in other books.

Even so, the body matter of the numerous 'sayings' or 'poems' books can be regrouped and re-edited so that Swamiji's philosophy and teachings may be viewed from different angles and interpreted for the benefit of different sections of the people. Hence on the occasion of the 72nd Birthday of Swamiji (8th September, 1958) the Sivananda Literature Research Institute was formed. The notification announcing this, reads thus:

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has contributed to world spiritual literature as perhaps no other individual philosopher-saint has done. In all of his nearly 300 books he has poured out the wisdom of an illumined soul.

The uniqueness of Sri Swamiji's writings has been acclaimed to be the freedom that he allows each individual seeker to pursue the path he is best fitted for, while emphasizing the need for an integration of his personality by harmonising the head, the heart and the hand. Sri Swamiji has rediscovered the various paths to Godhead, and flooded them with the light of his own realisation.

The Sivananda Literature today has grown into a vast ocean of wisdom. The need is therefore felt for conducting research into it, with a view to obtaining cogent expositions of Sri Swamiji's philosophy and teachings.

One major work of this institute is Sadhana, which consists of all the sadhanas detailed in Swamiji's books.

Translations

Enthusiastic disciples of Swamiji came forward even as early as 1939 to translate his writings into the different Indian languages — Hindi, Marathi, Telegu, Tamil, Malayalam, Oriya, Urdu, Kanarese, Gugerati, Assamese and Gurmukhi.*

There were very few foreign translations prior to 1953: only a couple of books in French and German translated through Sri Jean Herbert of Geneva and a few others cyclostyled for private circulation and produced by the dynamic and devout members of the Latvian branches of the Divine Life Society, headed by Sri Yogiraj Harry Dickman. However, in 1953 Sri Swami Paramanandaji wanted to take Swamiji on a global tour. The tentative programme was announced in a book which pictorially described Swamiji's All-India Tour of 1950. Letters began pouring into the ashram inviting Swamiji to various places all over the world. In order to prepare the ground Paramanandaji suggested the translation and publication of some of Swamiji's works in the various world languages. Publishers eagerly came forward to do this. Books were translated into Spanish, Danish, French, Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Yugoslavian and Czechoslovakian.*

The Global Tour had to be cancelled on account of Swamiji's indifferent health: but Swamiji's teachings had actually gone round the world.

The Sivananda Literature Dissemination Committee

The translators and those who would sponsor the publications chose the books they liked and released them. Swamiji authorised anyone, who expressed the desire, to undertake the translation; and in 1959 in order to regularise this great work the 'Sivananda Literature Dissemination Committee' was formed.

Soon after the 73rd Birthday Celebration (8th September, 1959) at

^{*} See Appendix

Sivananda Nagar, the Committee met there and framed the rules which would govern its functioning, and also selected the first set of books to be published under the auspices of this scheme. It was decided that specified books should be printed and released in all the languages on the 26th January (Independence Day) and on Guru Purnima.

Journals

Among publications, Swamiji had a special liking for the periodical: there is a very good reason for this. Whereas books may lie in stock for a considerable time, the periodical is sent out immediately. The widest circle of readers is reached almost at the same time by the journal: and the recipient (on account of the newspaper-reading habit, perhaps!) goes through the journal at once, whereas he might postpone reading a book to a day of leisure. It is this conviction that made Swamiji conduct a health magazine early in his career as a doctor, though publishing all the articles in book-form might have brought a better return and greater popularity.

Even among magazines, Swamiji liked the weekly. He felt that the bombardment with spiritual thoughts must be continuous and unremitting, if the forces of evil are to be rooted out. Therefore even during the Swarg Ashram days he inspired some devotees in Meerut to conduct a weekly journal — Swadharma. Swamiji himself was its editor. The first number of the journal was published in June 1935. Later, he edited another journal — Sankirtan — and had it published by the devotees in Meerut.

The Divine Life magazine was born in September, 1938, less than two years after the Society itself had been registered, and when the Society was still in its infancy and its finances slender.

For the inaugural issue of the magazine Swamiji gave the following message, which reveals his view-point:

There are now very few spiritual journals in the whole world. The world is in need of many high-class journals. Then only can spiritual ideas be widely broadcast. People are thirsting for spiritual ideas and contact with evolved souls. The materialistic world also is tired of money and power. They do not find any solace there. They are slowly directing their attention towards the quest for God and the search for mahatmas.

Up to July 1939 the Journal was issued from Lahore. The printing was done at the Mercantile Press, Lahore, by Swami Paramanandaji, and

later by Sri Nijabodha, till the Hindu-Muslim riots made it imperative that the work be taken out of Pakistan. The magazine was then shifted to Calcutta (General Printing Press), where it was printed from April 1948 to 1954. After that its publication was taken over by the Sivananda Publication League, Rishikesh. Swamiji himself was its first editor.

The magazine fulfilled a long-felt need. With the rapid growth of the institution Swamiji had begun to feel that the older way of 'leaflet-distribution' was inadequate. Something must be sent regularly to all those who were in contact with him: and it must be something substantial. With the advent of the magazine, visitors to the ashram got a copy of the magazine, instead of a leaflet.

In addition to this, the members of the Society were getting regular despatches of 'free literature', pamphlets and leaflets that the Society or the branches or individual devotees published. In 1949 this despatch was converted into *The Divine Life Membership Supplement*. (It was renamed *Wisdom Light* in April 1950.) The first issue of this supplement appeared on the 15th January 1949 and was sent to all the members of the Society and others who specially subscribed for it.

The enthusiasm of the selfless workers in the ashram, which was manifest in the efficient way in which the Membership Supplement was conducted, opened up the way for the entry of more journals. Swamiji then started the Divine Life Forest University Weekly on the 8th September, 1949. (Renamed Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly from 3rd August, 1950: and the word 'University' was substituted with 'Academy' in September, 1958.) For a couple of months it was cyclostyled; then the printing was entrusted to a printer in Mussoorie, who later shifted the press to Dehra Dun. After the establishment of the Vigyan Press, Rishikesh, it was shifted there: and since the establishment of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Press the work was done at the ashram.

Being always interested in promoting the physical and mental health of the people, Swamiji started a health journal. *Health and Long Life* was born on Swamiji's birthday, 8th September, 1951.

The Divine Life originally carried a Hindi section. Since this had to be discontinued on account of scarcity of paper during the war years, Swamiji felt the need of a Hindi magazine. The Yoga Vedanta (a Hindi monthly) was started in July, 1951. A Hindi health magazine (Arogya Jivan) was started on 8th September, 1951, but was later incorporated in Yoga-Vedanta itself.

Swamiji was now satisfied, to some extent!

To give better publicity to the activities of the Divine Life Branches,

the Branch Gazette was started on 15th January, 1952. These were the journals conducted by the headquarters. There are many branches who publish their own journals. Foremost among them is the Gujerati journal published by Dr. Adhvaryoo's Brihat Gujerat Divya Jivan Mandal; Path to God-Realisation published by Sri Swami Sivananda-Sahajananda of Durban (South Africa); Synthese Universal published in French by Sri Sivananda-Margarita of European Divine Life Society, etc. Thus did Swamiji's Divine Life message spread to every nook and corner of the globe.

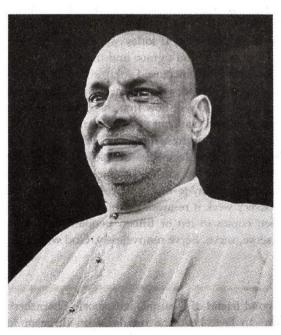
In the running of the journals Swamiji never concerned himself with the profit and loss accounts. Free distribution was his ideal and goal: if some people subscribed to the journals, he regarded it as their charity. This attitude on his part was made abundantly clear by what he said on the 26th November 1949, when there was a suggestion from one of the well-wishers of the Society that the magazine might be suspended for a year or two till the financial position of the Society improved:

I cannot think of stopping a magazine, whatever be the loss. Actually, I am thinking of starting a few more! It does not matter if we incur a little loss in the beginning. How much knowledge we give the public. God will give us money when He thinks fit. We have to go on working. If today we are getting over Rs.10,000 a month, it is due to God's grace and the work that we did ten years ago. The effect of the increased volume of work that we have undertaken today will be seen after ten years. Money is pouring forth now. Later on, gold will flow into the Society as from an ocean. I have therefore told Narayan to go on sending sample copies of the magazine to every address he can lay his hands on. The Weekly is simply stirring people today. People do not have the power of sustenance to keep up spiritual thoughts in their mind amidst the din and bustle of day-to-day city-existence: the Weekly serves them nicely. Every week it re-awakens them. Every day you should send specimen copies to ten or fifteen people. Keep on sending free. Serve, serve, serve. Serve motivelessly. God will reward you in due time.

Epilogue

Once a good friend of Swamiji, Mussoorie Shamshere, paid a visit to the ashram. In fact, he came regularly on three or four evenings, staying for several hours at a time. He was from a prominent cultured Nepalese family, very well educated and a most charming and interesting person. He was a shrewd judge of character, and, being both intelligent and endowed with a keen and ready sense of humour, he made an entertaining conversationalist.

Once while Swamiji was taking him over to the newly constructed temple, Mussoorie suddenly stopped and, looking at Swamiji, said: "Swamiji, I can't make out who you are and what exactly you are; whether a jnani, a raja yogi, a bhakta, a karma yogi or a sankirtanist. Usually a sadhu is known to people as Swami So-and-so, the great bhakta — or the well-known jnani or the famous hatha yogi. However, you seem to be no particular thing, yet you are all these. You are the most dynamic karma yogi also. U.P. and Punjab have hailed you as a great Sankirtanist. You are perfectly familiar with every line of yoga and equally at home with each of them. You are a puzzle," and he shook his head with mock dismay and smiled. After some time, he added thoughtfully: "Swamiji I don't know how you feel about it, but when I survey the results achieved by your activity within this last decade or so, I personally feel that you have done what is humanly impossible for one man to do."



LAST DAYS

"All who want sannyas should take initiation on the next Sivaratri day." This pronouncement was made by Swamiji at an evening satsang early in 1963. In view of his repeated references in recent years to his mahasamadhi, many saw this unbounded invitation as a sign of his imminent passing — particularly when he added "Who knows what may happen next Sivaratri?"

Swamiji, who had always kept spending and giving, and teaching his disciples and residents of the ashram to trust in God and to give and give and give, suddenly began to manifest a different attitude. He started an economy drive — a thing unheard of for him — slashing ashram expenditure and talking of taking more care.

On several occasions during May and June he asked different people to bring him a calendar. Once, as he was looking at July, a disciple asked why, and he received the reply "You don't know."

Early in May Swamiji began a rigorous session of tape-recordings. Each morning he would read from his books and printed sheets, forcefully and inspiringly — his voice ringing with authority and sincerity —while a disciple recorded. He did this for hours, unmindful of the strain. Every few days he would ask "How much matter have I given?" or, "How long will it run?" Once during these sessions he said "The sight is getting dim; take whatever you want now. The hearing is getting dull; tell whatever you want to tell, now itself. The tongue is getting inarticulate; ask whatever you want to ask."

At this time he also wrote many articles for journals. He had always regularly contributed articles to journals, but he seemed to be sending out

all that he could in this period.

On the 21st June he developed pain in his hip, and on this rare occasion did not attend the satsang. The next day he could not go to the ashram office, but attended to business from his kutir. At night the pain grew more intense, and the following morning he came out on to his verandah to see the mail, and insisted on continuing to tape-record the day's quota of spiritual reading. He gave a little dictation, but retired early. The pain worsened.

On a subsequent day, despite illness, Sivananda began dictating as usual. After a few sentences he said quietly, "Happiness comes when the individual merges in God." There was a long pause. Then asked if he would continue, he said strongly in Tamil "Porum!" (Enough!).

'Happiness comes when the individual merges in God,' was the last recorded message of Swami Sivananda.

A doctor from Dehru Dun, on examining Swamiji, said: "Swamiji you should not worry about anything. You should not think about anything." Quietly and lovingly came the reply: "How can that be possible? I must think of many things, I must look after many people."

It was always Swamiji's way, whenever anyone enquired about his health, to reply "Most wonderful" — and during this period whenever he was asked, a smile would play around his lips as he replied, "I am perfectly alright".

During this period Swamiji was not seeing any visitors and no one was allowed into his kutir, but from July 6th his condition started to improve so that on July 8th he was wheeled onto his verandah and once again visitors were allowed to go to him. He had the doors of his verandah kept open so that he could gaze upon his beloved Ganges.

Despite physical suffering he was never dejected, his spirit was ever joyful and he would joke with his attendants. All who went near him during his last illness felt his irresistible love flowing out and encompassing them.

On the evening of July 14th he developed a fever. For some time he had difficulty in swallowing even a few mouthfuls of water. His disciples wanted to give him barley water, as was the usual practice, but he insisted on Ganges water. It was brought to him and he had no difficulty in swallowing half a glassful: and with that he departed from the body. It was 11:15 p.m.

Close to midnight there was an unparalleled and auspicious planetary conjunction that any yogi ready to depart would not wish to miss. It was at this time that Swamiji chose to depart. Last Days 413

Swamiji's body was placed in the lotus posture. Dazed and tearful disciples and devotees softly chanted the maha mantra on the verandah of his kutir, while one by one the ashram inmates went in, to bow before the beloved form in silence.

The next morning, through the newspapers and radio, the world learnt of the mahasamadhi of this great saint. Messages of sympathy and condolence from all over the world kept the post office working at full pressure. The residents of Rishikesh streamed into the ashram. All the following day and far into the night devotees came from everywhere for the last darshan.

On Tuesday, July 16, there was barely room to stand on the Ganges bank adjacent to the ashram. Everywhere crowds gathered to catch a final glimpse of the beloved form of Swami Sivananda.

At 10.30 a.m., borne by his personal attendants, the bier moved out of the kutir as conches were blown and bells chimed. To the sound of vedic chanting, slowly and with great care the holy form of Swami Sivananda was borne towards the Ganges, where it was ceremoniously bathed. It was then placed on a palanquin filled with flowers and borne in procession to the ashram area on the Viswanath Mandir hill. Arati was performed.

To the recitation of holy mantras, Swamiji's body was taken in and tenderly placed in the samadhi shrine — its final resting place.

Tributes came from all over the world. Swami Venkatesananda perhaps spoke for all close disciples when he wrote from Mauritius:

So the ringing voice is silent. The majestic form has vanished. We shall no more see the gigantic figure clad in orange, shod in canvas shoes, stride with measured long steps, bags in hand, ready to distribute fruits, wisdom and work to us, his beloved children. That child-like giggling, with the big tummy quaking with convulsions of joy — a laughter so wholesome that tears of joy bedimmed the sparkling eyes; a laughter that radiated the bliss of God to all — can be heard no more.

The end is perhaps shocking. But that is not the end. It is a beginning. The Builder worked outside: he was on view. He created an inside, and he has entered it. Now he works inside, out of external view, but more truly and purposefully active, therefore. Gurudev has moulded us, given shape to shapeless masses, laid stone upon stone in us and built a shrine, entered it and is now busy at work in there.

APPENDIX

A Garland of Sivananda Literature

(This beautiful garland, delightful and instructive, has been woven out of the titles of Swamiji's numerous works.)

Titles of Swamiji's works are printed in this type. (For the complete list of works, see Sivananda's Elixir.)

Now listen to the Sivananda Vani! Sivananda's Teachings, the cream of Philosophy and Yoga!

Words of Ancient Wisdom or the Sayings of Swami Sivananda are Wisdom Sparks, the Illuminating Messages which provide you with Religious Education.

"Achieve the Life's Goal" So Says Sivananda. The Heart of Sivananda is revealed in his Satsang Bhavan Lectures. He gives Sure Ways for Success in Life and God-realisation in his Voice of the Himalayas. The Goal of Life, he declares, is God-realisation or Self-realisation. The Secret of God-realisation he gives in Aphorisms and Parables. Worldly Man! Wake up! Follow the Guide to God-realisation. Listen to his Gospel of Divine Life. Enter in Yoga Maharnava. Reach the Himalaya Jyoti.

Drink the Wisdom Nectar. Practice of Bhakti Yoga, Japa Yoga, Sankirtan Yoga, Practice of Karma Yoga, Hatha Yoga and The Practice of Brahmacharya, are all Aids to God-realisation. But, How to Get Vairagya? Understand The Philosophy of Dreams. Reflect over What Becomes of the Soul after Death. Sing Sangeeta Bhagawath. Study Samadhi Yoga. Practise Jnana Yoga. Know the Secret of Self-Realisation. Offer your Divine Life as Shraddhanjali unto the Lord. This is the Easy Path to God-realisation.

Ensure Health and Happiness by the regular practice of Yoga Asanas or Yogic Home Exercises. Understand well the Science of Pranayama.

Be your own Family Doctor. Study Health and Hygiene; learn Home Nursing and First Aid to the Injured; understand the relation between Health and Diet; and use Bazaar Drugs and Home Remedies: thus become your own Home Physician.

Become an expert in the Practice of Nature Cure and in the use of Practical Household Remedies: and you will know everything about Constipation (Its Cause and Cure), Asthma (Its Cause and Cure), etc.

Take Care of the Eyes.

If you know How to Get Sound Sleep and have Conquest of Anger and Conquest of Fear, you will be free from high Blood Pressure.

Stick to the Ethics of the Bhagavad Gita. Gita is the Universal Mother. It is Adhyatma Yoga Samhita.

The Essence of Ramayana, too, is the Ethical Teachings contained in it! The Beauties of Ramayana can be understood only by one who believes that God Exists and who is eager to know All About Hinduism. To him it is a Treasure of Teachings.

Wear a garland of Pearls of Wisdom or Perennial Teachings. Remember the Moral Lessons of saints (Sivananda Smriti). They are fountains of Light, Power and Wisdom.

Brahmacharya and Spiritual Life are inseparable. Therefore, practise brahmacharya and know How to Live a Hundred Years. Swamiji emphasised the Necessity for Sannyas and exhorted us to cultivate Sadhana Chatushtaya.

Before undertaking the Practice of Yoga, understand the Mind, Its Mysteries and Control. Wear the Vairagya Mala and swim on the Waves of Ganga, the Waves of Bliss. Study daily the Yoga Kundalini Upanishads; practise Kundalini Yoga and attain Yoga and Realisation. Kundalini Yoga gives several Spiritual Experiences, Joy, Bliss and Immortality, as well as Health and Long Life.

Raja Yoga bestows Psychic Influence on you. Therefore, study the Fourteen Lessons in Raja Yoga and know the Philosophy and Meditation on Om. Have Daily Readings of a page from Gita Meditations before your morning practice of Concentration and Meditation. The Jnana Jyoti will illumine your Path to Perfection. Sivananda Upanishad is good for Practical Meditation.

A thorough understanding of the Science of Reality will ensure the Students' Success in Life. Swamiji's Lectures on Yoga and Vedanta are the Sadhak's Guide. They are Easy Steps to Yoga and contain The Essence of

Vedanta. Sivananda's All-India Tour Lectures, Radio Talks and Doon Lectures, Echo the Voice of Sivananda and have effected a Dynamic Spiritual Awakening, we are assured in his "Story of My Tour". His Inspiring Messages have gone round the world. His Telegraphic Teachings have thrilled thousands. His First Lessons in Vedanta represent the Essence of Teachings of all sages. Siva Gita or Sivananda's Autobiography reveals the Wisdom of Siva and gives Yogic and Vedantic Sadhana in a nutshell. The Principal Upanishads (including Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and Chhandogya Upanishad), Minor Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, Moksha Gita, Ananda Gita and Jivanmukta Gita, throw a flood of Light on Yoga Sadhana. Ten Upanishads is Vedanta Jyoti: it is A Wisdom Eye-opener.

Through Revelation, attain Wisdom of the Upanishads; then work for World Peace.

If you want to taste the Bhakti Rasamritam (Essence of Bhakti Yoga), take to Bhakti and Sankirtan, recite Stotra Ratnamala, Stotra Pancharatna, Sangita Lila Yoga, Ananda Lahiri and Devi Mahatmya, and emulate Radha's Prem or St. Alavandar. Recognise Music as Yoga; sing Inspiring Songs and Kirtans before your Daily Meditation.

The Lives of Great Men and Women are the Light Divine that illumine your Path to God-realisation, leading to Peace and Perfection. The Lives of Sixty-three Nayanars are not merely Illuminating Stories, but an illustration of Narada Bhakti Sutras: and their illuminating, immortal teachings are so many Steps to Self-realisation.

Visit the Ashrams and Saints as also the Temples of India; undertake a Pilgrimage to Badri and Kailas. Carry a Pocket Prayer Book wherever you go. Be devoted to Lord Siva and His Worship, or to Lord Shanmukha and His Worship.

Swamiji's Advice to Women is that they should grow into Ideal Womanhood and should be familiar with Hindu Fasts and Festivals. They should prescribe Divine Life for Children, teach their children Gems of Prayers, Divine Stories, Spiritual Stories and Philosophical Stories. Early in life the children should be given Spiritual Lessons and Practical Lessons in Yoga. The Lives of Saints and Sages should be their ideal. This is Sthree Dharma, in short. Bequeath Yoga Teachings as your Children's Divine Treasure.

Hindu children should be taught all about Lord Krishna: His Lilas and Teachings. Christian children should be acquainted with Lord Jesus, His Life and Teachings. Education For Perfection must teach students How to Cultivate Virtues and Eradicate Vices, not only How to Become Rich; and should tend towards Moral and Spiritual Regeneration of the World.

The Yoga of Synthesis is the Yoga for the Modern Man. Narrate Siva Lilas, Stories from Mahabharata, Stories From Yoga Vasishtha. Hold classes in Upanishads for Lay Men and Busy People. Keep The Yoga-Vedanta Dictionary by your side. Discourse on Bhagavad Gita. Initiate only fit people into Swara Yoga, Tantra Yoga, Nada Yoga and Kriya Yoga. Teach Suryanamaskar to all. Practise and preach Triple Yoga. Enact the Upanishad Drama or Brahma Vidya Vilas — get the Dialogues from Upanishads. When you teach Vedanta for Beginners, emphasise Vedanta in Daily Life. Daily offer Pushpanjali to Mother Ganges.

Let your Conversations be on Yoga. Mix (Wisdom) Philosophy in Humour. Write Essays in Philosophy. Get by heart The Essence of all Gitas or The Essence of Gita in Poems. They contain the Essence of Yoga. Enact the Ramayana Drama. You will soon be An Encyclopaedia of Spiritual Knowledge. Dhyana Yoga is the Yoga for the West. Take to Studies in Western Philosophy and know How Westerners Practise Yoga. Study the fundamentals of World's Religions and realise the Unity of Religions.

Maharishi Sivananda's Yoga-Vedanta Sutras point out the Life Divine and are your Spiritual Awakener(s) and Life-transformer(s). Inspiring Letters that Transform men's lives have flowed from Swamiji as his Jnana Ganga, to Alavandariah, Gajanan Sharma, DR. Chhatrapati and Paramananda. They contain the Philosophy and Teachings of Sivananda; and are a valuable Guide to Aspirants, in the Practice of Vedanta. The Sayings of Swami Sivananda are his Select Teachings — our Pocket Gems or Vedantic Pearls.

Yoga Prasnottari means Yoga, Questions and Answers. These Analects of Sivananda are Nectar Drops, which contain the Essence of Principal Upanishads and lead to Self-knowledge. These are Swamiji's Precepts for Practice; his Message to Mankind.

Books Published Abroad

English Editions:

(1) Yoga for the West.

Published by Sr. Yogiraj Marshall, Florida.

(2) What Becomes of the Soul After Death, (3) Concentration and Meditation.

Published by the Divine Life Society, Yoga Institute, Hong Kong.

Indonesian:

(1) Kundalini Yoga, (2) Yoga Asanas, (3) Bhagavad Gita, (4) Sehat Walafiat Karena Yoga (5) Begitulah Sivananda Bilang. Translated by Sri Kwee Liong Tian.

Published by the Editor of Penjedar, Malaya, Indonesia. Nos. 5 and 4 published by the Divine Life Society, Indonesia.

Chinese:

Kundalini Yoga.

Translated by Sri Chang Hsiu Jen.

Published by Sri Wai Kai Aah of Hong Kong.

Japanese:

Yoga Asanas.

Published by T. Hate, Japan.

Russian:

Five books translated and published by Sri Yogiraj V. Olshansky of Teheran — compiled by him from Swamiji's works.

Yugoslavian:

(1) Ovo Djelo Ponizno Posvecujem.

Danish:

(1) Hatha Yoga.

Published by Yogiraj Louis Brinkfort, Copenhagen, Denmark.

(2) Hvad er Yoga.

Translated by Sri Aage Faergemann and published by the Sivananda School of Yoga, Denmark.

Czechoslovakian:

(1) Sivananda's Integral Yoga, by Swami Venkatesananda, (2) Guru and Disciple (compiled by Sri Swami Satchidananda).

All World Religions' Federation

- (a). The name of the organisation, whose aims and objects are given below, shall be the All World Religions' Federation.
 - (b). Its headquarters shall be Ananda Kutir, Rishikesh.
 - (c). Its aims and objects are as mentioned hereunder:
- 1. To establish the much needed unity of religions.
- 2. To do constructive work for the observance in practice of all the ethical and hygienic teaching found in all the prominent religions of the world.
- 3. To re-establish faith in unchanging ancient truths and preserve ancient traditions in so far as they are not incompatible with modern conditions of life.
- 4. To develop simplicity in life.
- 5. To re-model education, to make it an aid to spiritual progress.
- 6. To preserve the classical languages and revive a taste in them so

that all scriptures may be studied in the original.

- 7. To organise and hold periodical conferences at different centres.
- 8. To institute local branches in different centres all over the world.
- 9. To publish magazines, books and leaflets for carrying out the objects of the Federation.
- 10. To constitute local committees in the various branches.
- 11. To organise a touring commission in the various branches.
- 12. To build up a library.
- 13. To establish a central Administration Committee at the headquarters to be ever in communication with the branches.
- 14. To constitute an advisory board consisting of members living in different geographical areas but offering advice, in all matters pertaining to the Federation, by correspondence. There need not be a limit to the number of members.
- 15. To publish monthly progress reports and send them to all active members of the Federation, for information about the activities of the branches all over the world.
- 16. To do any other act which may be pertinent to the aims and objects of the Federation.

The Spiritual Diary

Month:		Dates			
Qu	estions			\top	
1.	When did you get up from bed?				11
2. 1	How many hours did you sleep?				
3. 1	How many malas of japa did you do?			1 1	1 1
4.]	How long in kirtan?				
5. 1	How many pranayamas did you do?				
6.	How long did you perform yoga asanas?		11		
7.	How many verses of the Gita did you read?				
8.	How long did you spend in the company of			1 1	1 1
	the wise (satsanga)?				
9.	How long did you meditate in one asana?			1 1	
10.	How many hours did you give in charity?				
11.	How long in unselfish service?				
12.	How much did you give in charity?				
13.	How many mantras did you write?		1 1	11	
14.	How long did you practice physical exercise?			1 1	
15.	How many lies did you tell, and with what				
	self-punishment?			11	1 1
16.	How many times and how long of anger,				
	and with what self-punishment?				
17.	How many hours did you spend in useless				
	company?				11
18.	How many times did you fail in				
	brahmacharya (celibacy)?		11		
19.	How long in the study of religious books?	1 1		1 1	
20.	How many times did you fail in the control				
	of evil habits, and with what				
	self-punishment?				
21.	How long did you concentrate on your Ishta				
	Devata, abstract or concrete meditation?				1 1
22.	How many days did you observe fast and				1 1
	vigil?	1 1			
23.	Were you regular in your meditation?				11
24.	What virtue are you developing?				11
25.	What evil quality are you trying to				
	eradicate?				
26.	Which sense-organ is troubling you most?	11			
	When did you go to bed?				

Name	
Address	

GLOSSARY

Abhishekam: Pouring milk or water over an image of the Lord

Abhyasa yoga: The yoga of constant practise

Acharya: Teacher

Advaita: Non dual — monism Aham Brahmasmi: 'I am Brahman'

Ahimsa: Non injury in thought,

word and deed

Akhanda kirtan: Unbroken singing of the names and glories of the Lord

Akrodha: Absence of anger Allopathic: Western medicine

Almirah: Cupboard Ananda: Bliss

Annakshetra: Common dining hall Arati: Waving of lights before an image of God

Archana: Offering flowers and leaves to an image of the Lord during worship

Arya Samajist: Follower of Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayananda

Asana: Seat; posture Ashram: Monastery

Ashramite: One who lives in an

ashram
Asura: Demon

Asuric: From asura. A person of evil

tendencies

Atma bhava: Feeling that everything is the Self

Atma jnana: Direct knowledge of the Self

Atman: The Self

Avadhuta: A naked ascetic Avatar(a): A coming down of the Divine into the human plane;

incarnation of the Lord

Ayurveda: System of Indian medicine

Ayurvedacharya: An expert in ayurvedic medicine

Bael leaves: Sacred leaves of the bael tree. Used in worship of Lord Siva Babu: One who loves luxury

Bandhas: Class of hatha yoga exercises. (See Health and Hatha Yoga.)

Yoga.) hagayad Gita: H

Bhagavad Gita: Hindu Scripture
Bhagavan: The Lord; form of address

to a holy man

Bhagavatam: Hindu Scripture
Bhagiratha: River which joins the
Ganges near Rishikesh

Bhajan: Worship and praise of the

Lord

Bhakta: Devotee

Bhakti: Devotion; love of God Bhakti marga: Path of devotion

Bhangi: Rogue

Bhasma: Sacred ash

Bhastrika: Hatha yoga breathing

exercise

Bhav(a): Inner attitude; purity of

thought

Bhavan: Meeting place Bhoga: Enjoyment

Bhiksha: Alms

Brahma: God as Creator Brahmachari(n): Celibate

Brahmacharya: The first stage of the Hindu's life — celibate student's

Brahmajnana: Direct knowledge of Brahman

Brahmamuhurta: Period of an hourand a half before sunrise

Brahman: The Supreme Reality that is one and indivisible, infinite and eternal

Brahma Sutras: Hindu scriptures
Brahma tejas: Light of wisdom
Brahma vicar(a): Enquiry into
Brahman

Brahma vidya: Knowledge of Brahman; learning pertaining to Brahman or the Absolute Reality

Brahmic: Of Brahman
Brahmic consciousness: God

consciousness

Brahmin: Member of the priestly

caste

Chana-ki-dhal: Lentil soup Chapati: Unleavened bread

Chela: Disciple

Conch: Large shell which is blown

like a trumpet Curd: Yoghurt

Dandam: Stick of a sannyasi or

mendicant

Darshan: Holy company

Daya: Mercy Devas: Deities

Devatas: The deities who receive the worship of men and grant their

desires

Devi: Goddess

Dhal: Lentil soup

Dharamsala: Public rest house Dharana: Concentration of mind Dharma: Righteous way of living Dharmic: Action according to

dharma

Dhoti: Piece of cloth worn as a skirt,

wrapped around the body

Dhyana: Meditation Diksha: Initiation

Durbar: Official reception

Durga: The Divine Mother; Shakti;

another name for Kali Durga Puja: Worship of Durga;

Navaratri

Dvesha: Dislike; hatred

Ekadasi: Eleventh day of the Hindu lunar fortnight

Fakir: Ascetic monk

Ganesha: Son of Lord Siva; the elephant-headed God (symbolises wisdom)

Ganesh Puja: Worship of Ganesha Ganga: Hindi name for Ganges

river

Gerua: Orange colouring used in

Ghat: Steps leading down into a

Ghee: Clarified butter

Gita: Bhagavad Gita; Hindu scripture

Gita jayanthi: 'birthday' of the

Bhagavad Gita Goshala: Cowshed

Guha: Cave Guru: Spiritual preceptor

Guru bhakti: Devotion to the guru Guru Granth Sahib: Sacred scripture

of the Sikhs

Guru mantra: Sacred word or formula

given by the guru

Guru purnima: Festival to worship the

guru

Guru stotra: Hymn to the guru

Guru seva: Service of the guru

Hanuman: Monkey god from the epic Ramayana

Hari: Name of God (Krishna) Hatha yoga: Physical Yoga. (See

Health & Hatha Yoga)

Hatha yogi: One who is an adept in

hatha yoga

Havan: Fire ceremony Homa: See havan

Idli: A steamed South Indian breakfast dish

Ishta devata: A person's chosen deity Ishta mantra: A personal mantra

Jagadguru: World teacher

Jai: Victory

Japa: Repetition of ishta mantra

Japa mala: A string of 108 beads for doing japa

Jaya: Victory Jayanthi: Birthday

Jivanmukta: Liberated while living

Inana: Wisdom

Jnana yajna: Dissemination of knowledge; offering of the individual to the Supreme

Jnani: Sage Jyoti: Light

Kaivalya: Liberation

Kali Yuga: The present Age

Kamandalu: Water pot used by yogis - usually made from a gourd Karma: Law of Action (As you sow,

so shall you reap)

Karma Yoga: Yoga of selfless service.

(See Karma Yoga)

Karnatic music: South Indian music Kartal: Musical instrument like a

cymbal

Karuna: Compassion

Katha Upanishad: Hindu scripture Katha: Tale or story; history or

narrative

Khaddar: Home spun cloth

Kirtan: Singing the names and glories of God

Kowpeen: Piece of cloth worn as

underwear

Krishna: Name of God; avatar of

Lord Vishnu

Kriya: Physical action; particular

exercise in hatha yoga Kshama: Forgiveness Kshetra: Alms house

Kumbhak: Retention of breath Kumbha mela: Spiritual festival Kumkum: Coloured powder worn as

a dot on the forehead

Kundalini: The primordial cosmic energy located in the individual

Kundalini shakti: The power of

kundalini

Kundalini yoga: A yoga in which kundalini is aroused. (See Health

and Hatha Yoga) Kutir: Cottage

Lac: 10,000

Laddu: Indian sweetmeat Lakshya: Point of concentration Langoti: Underwear, same as

kowpeen

Likhit japa: Mantra writing

Lila: Play, sport; the cosmos looked

on as a divine play

Lingam: Symbol of Lord Siva Lord Vishwanath: Lord Siva

Maha: Great

Mahabharata: A Hindu epic Mahant: Head of a group of

sannyasins

Maharajah: Indian prince

Maharani: Wife of an Indian prince Maha Sivaratri: The day on which Lord Siva is worshipped

Maha vakyas: Great sentences, e.g.

'Thou art That'

Mahatma: Great soul; saint; sage Maitri: Friendliness

Mala: Rosary of 108 beads

Manasic puja: Worship done mentally

Mandaleshwar: Head of ashram

Mandir: Temple

Manipravala: A mixture of languages

Mantra: Special formula

Mantra diksha: When the guru
initiates a disciple into a mantra

Marga: Path Math: Ashram

Mauna: Vow of silence

Maya: The Lord's illusive power Mendicant: A monk who lives solely

by begging

Moksha: Liberation

Mudra: A class of exercise in Hatha yoga; symbols shown in movements of the hands in worship

Murali Manohara: Lord Krishna Murthi: Idol or image of God

Murthi puja: Worship of an image of God

Nada: Sound

Nadis: Psychic channels in the

body Nagar: Town

Nagaswaram: A South Indian musical

instrument
Nam(a): Name
Namah: Salutations

Nama sankirtan: Singing the names of

God

Namaskar(a): A form of greeting

Nandi: Lord Siva's bull Narayan(aya): Name of God

Navaratri: Nine day worship of the Divine Mother; Durga Puja

Nirvana: Liberation

Nishkama karma: Selfless service

Nivritti: Renunciation

Nyaya: Logic; one of the six schools

of Indian philosophy

Om: Verbal indicator of Brahman; primal sound of the universe Om Tat Sat: A designation of Brahman; used as a benediction

Pada puja: Worship of the feet of a holy man

Padma: Lotus
Pahimam: Protect me
Pandal: Marquee
Pandit: Priest
Papa: Demerit; sin
Para puja: Worship of the

Omnipresent Lord Pariah: Outcaste

Parvati: Hindu goddess; consort of

Lord Siva
Patram: Leaf

Prakriti: Causal matter Prana: Life force; vital energy Pranashakti: Subtle vital power

Pranava: OM

Pranayama: Control of life force through breathing. (See Health

and Hatha Yoga)

Prarabdha: The karma which determines one's present life.

Prasad(a): Food which has been offered to God at worship and eaten by the faithful devotees

Pratyahara: Sense control: See Raja Yoga—The Yoga System of Patanjali

Prem(a): Divine love Puja: Worship Punya: Merit; virtue

Purak: Inhalation
Purak-rechak-kumbhak: Inhalation-

exhalation-retention

Puranas: Ancient Hindu scriptures

Pushbam: Flower

Pushpanjali: Offering of flowers

Raga dvesha: Likes and dislikes

Rajah: Indian prince

Raja Yoga: Yoga of mysticism. (See Raja Yoga. The Yoga System of

Patanjali)

Rajasic: Passionate; active; restless

Rama: Hindu God

Ramayana: Hindu scripture Rani: Wife of a rajah

Rechak: Exhalation

Riddhis: Lesser psychic powers

Rishi: Sage

Roti: Unleavened bread—like a pancake; also known as chapati

Rudra: Name of Lord Siva Rudra aspect: Fierce aspect Rudraksha: Seed used in malas Rudram: Hymn to Lord Siva

Rupees: Indian coins

Sadhak: Spiritual aspirant
Sadhana: Spiritual practices
Sadhu: Holy man; a sannyasi
Saivites: Worshippers of Lord Siva
Samadhi: State of super
consciousness

Sambhavana: An offering made with devotion and reverence

Samsara: The process of worldly life Samskaras: Innate tendencies Sanatana dharma: Eternal religion

Sangha(m): A gathering of people Sankara: Founder of advaita vedanta.

Born in 686 A.D.

Sankhya: An Indian system of philosophy

Sankirtan: Communal chanting the names of God

Sannyas: Renunciation

Sannyas diksha: Ceremony whereby one becomes a sannyasi

Sannyasi(n): A monk; one who has embraced a life of complete renunciation

Saraswathi: Indian goddess; consort of Brahma

Sat: Truth

Satchidananda: Existence, knowledge, bliss absolute

Satguru: World teacher

Satsang(a): Association with the wise

Sattvic: Pure Satya(m): Truth

Satya yuga: A former Age

Savikalpa samadhi: Samadhi with the triad of knower, knowledge and known

Self-realisation: Liberation

Seva: Work Sevak: Servant

Shakti: Power; energy; force

Shamiana: Large tent

Shanti: Peace

Shanti mantras: Peace chants Shanti path: Peace prayer

Shastra: Scripture

Shastra jnana: Wisdom of the

scriptures

Siddha asana: Sitting posture. (See

Health & Hatha Yoga)
Siddhis: Psychic powers
Sirshasana: Headstand
Sita: Wife of Lord Rama

Sitali: Breathing exercise. (See Health

& Hatha Yoga)

Siva: One of the gods of the Hindu trinity — Brahma, Vishnu & Siva Sivaratri: Festival in which Lord Siva

is worshipped

Siva stotra: Hymn to Lord Siva

Sivoham: 'I am Siva'

Sloka: Verse

Smriti: Scripture dealing with ethics

and morality

Soham: 'I am He'

Sri Suktam: Hymn to Devi

Stotra: Hymn

Subramanya: Hindu God

Sukadeva: Indian sage

Surya: The sun

Surya namaskara: Salutations to the sun; sun exercises. (See Health &

Hatha Yoga)
Sutras: Aphorisms

Swadhyaya: Study of scriptures;

self-study

Swami: Master, holy man

Swamiji: Familiar form of 'Swami' Swarup Essential nature; Reality

Tamasic: Dull; lethargic; stupid Tampura: Indian stringed musical instrument used as background drone

Tantra: Science of using mantras

and yantras

Tantrik: One who possesses magical powers and uses mantras and yantras

Tapas(ya): Austerity

Tat Twam Asi: 'Thou art That'

Tiffin: Snack

Tilak: Spot between the eyebrows made with coloured powder or

paste

Titiksha: Endurance

Tratak: Hatha Yoga exercise. (See

Health & Hatha Yoga)
Tonga: Horse-drawn cart
Tulasi: Holy basil plant

Upadesha: Spiritual instruction Upanishads: Hindu scriptures Upasana: Devout meditation; worship

Vacha: Speech Vaikuntha: Heaven Vairagya: Dispassion

Vairagyi: One who is dispassionate Vaiseshika: One of the schools of

Indian philosophy

Vaishnavas: Worshippers of Vishnu Vanaprashta: One who leads the third

stage of life

Vedanta: School of Hindu thought based primarily on the Upanishads, upholding the doctrine of pure non-dualism or conditional non-dualism

Vedantin: Follower of vedanta
Vedas: Indian sacred scriptures said
to be revealed by God

Vedic: Of the Vedas

Vibhuti: The special forms in which the Lord manifests himself.

Vichar(a): Enquiry

Vidya: Knowledge (of Brahman) Vijayadasami: Last day of Navarati

Vijayam: Victory

Viraja homa: Hindu fire ceremony Virakta: One who is dispassionate Virat Swarup: The Lord in His form as the manifested universe

Virya: Seminal energy; strength;

Vishnu: Hindu god; member of the Holy trinity — Brahma, Vishnu, Siva; the aspect of preservation Vishwanath: Name of Lord Siva Vishwa Prem: The unreal

Vishwanath Mandir: Temple of Lord

Siva

Viveka: Discrimination between the real and the unreal

Yantra: Special geometric design

Yajna: Sacrifice

Yatra: Pilgrimage; journey

Yoga: Union of the individual with the Supreme Being; any course that makes for such union Yogabhyas: Practice of yoga Yogi: One who practises yoga; a

siddha
Yuga: One of the four divisions of

time

Zamindar: Wealthy landowner









